Henry Reid

LETTERS AND SERMONS,

INCLUDING

CARDIPHONIA AND THE MESSIAH;

A REVIEW OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY,

HYMNS,

AND

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

By JOHN NEWTON,
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SIX

SIX

DISCOURSES, (or SERMONS),

As intended for the Pulpit.

Στύλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον· Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκὶ—

PREFACE.

THE following Discourses were drawn up about twelve months since, when I expected a speedy opportunity of delivering them from the pulpit. As the views I then had are now over-ruled, I take this method of laying them before the public; that those who have thought proper to foretell the part I would have acted, and the doctrine I would have taught, if my desires had taken place, may be either satisfied or silenced.

Yet I should not have thought it worth my while, to give either myself or others this trouble, merely for my own vindication. Attempts of this kind usually imply too much of a man's importance to himself, to be either acceptable or successful. Or at best, it can be a point of no great moment to my real happiness, what the few persons to whom my little name is known, are pleased to say or think of me. Nothing but great inattention to our true circumstances, can afford us leisure either to censure others, or to justify ourselves; unless when the interest of religion or morality are evidently concerned. A few years will fix and determine our characters beyond all possibility of mistake; and till then it would be vain to hope for it.

The true reasons, therefore, of this publication are, the importance of the subjects treated of; and the probability that, upon this occasion, many persons who have not yet considered them with the attention they deserve, may be induced (some from a motive of friendship, and others from curiosity) to read what might appear in my name, the rather for being mine.

Had

Had I wrote with a design to print, I should have chose to put my sentiments in another form: and perhaps a desire to avoid the censure of severe critics, would have made me more solicitous about expression and method. But as I profess to publish not what I might, *but what I really* would *have spoken, I could not allow myself to deviate from my first draught, except in a few places where I thought the sense entangled, ambiguous, or defective. For the same reason, I am forced to decline the judgement and correction of my friends, the advantages of which, as well as my own great need of them, I have more than once experienced.*

If there is found in some places a coincidence of thought or expression, I hope it will be excused; as I had not the least apprehension, at the time of composing, that what I designed for distinct and separate occasions, would ever appear abroad in one view.

In a word; so far as these essays are mine, I entreat a candid perusal; and that those who read them in order to form their judgement of the author, do not make their estimate from a sentence here and there; but have the patience to read them throughout. So far as what they contain is agreeable to scripture, reason, and experience, an apology would be impertinent. In this case they deserve *attention. Every particle of truth is valuable in itself, by whatever means or instruments it may be conveyed to us; and like a torch displays itself by its own light, without any relation to the hand that bears it.*

Liverpool, January 1. 1760.

SER-

SERMON I.

ON THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

JER. xvii. 9. 10.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

THE Prophet Jeremiah had a hard task. He was appointed to inculcate unwelcome truths upon a vain insensible people. He had the grief to find all his expostulations and warnings, his prayers and tears, had no other effect than to make them account him their enemy, and to draw reproach and persecution upon himself. He lived to see the accomplishment of his own predictions; to see the land of his nativity desolated, the city destroyed, the people almost extirpated, and the few who remained, transported into a distant country, to end their days in captivity.

Those who have resolved, honestly and steadily, to declare the word of the Lord, have, in all ages, found a part of this trial: the message they have had to deliver has been disagreeable and disregarded. It is no hard matter to frame discourses that shall meet with some degree of general approbation; nor is it difficult to foresee the reception which plain truth must often meet with: but those who [illegible] must perform it; and minister[illegible] every thing [illegible] whether they will hear,

hear, or whether they will forbear. If the watchman ſees the danger coming, and does not blow the trumpet, to give the moſt public notice poſſible, he is anſwerable for all the evils that may follow. This is applied as a caution to the Prophet Ezekiel; and undoubtedly, every one who adminiſters in holy things is concerned in it. "So thou, O ſon "of man, I have ſet thee a watchman unto the "Houſe of Iſrael; therefore thou ſhalt hear the "word at my mouth, and warn them from me. "When I ſay unto the wicked man, O wicked "man, thou ſhalt ſurely die; if thou doſt not ſpeak "to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked "man ſhall die in his iniquity, but his blood "will I require at thine hand," Ezek. xxxiii. Let this awful paſſage plead our excuſe, if, at any time, we ſeem too urgent, or too plain, in our diſcourſes. Too plain or urgent we cannot be. Our buſineſs is moſt important: opportunities are critical and precious. It is at the hazard of our ſouls if we ſpeak deceitfully; and at the hazard of yours, if we ſpeak in vain.

In the preceding verſes, the prophet gives us a ſtriking image of the oppoſition between the righteous and the wicked, in their preſent ſtate, their hopes and their end. The one is compared to a tree: the other to heath and ſtubble; the one *planted* by ſtreams of water: the other, *expoſed* on the ſalt burning deſert: the one, green, flouriſhing, all full of fruit; the other, parched, and withering: the hope of the one, fixed on the Lord, the all-ſufficient Almighty God; the raſh dependence of the other, on a frail feeble arm of fleſh. Suitable to this difference is their end: the one, bleſſed, provided againſt all evil, ſo that he ſhall not be careful in the year of drought; the other, curſed, and cut off from the expectation of any amendment. "He ſhall not ſee when good co-

"meth."

" meth." The immediate design was perhaps to shew the Jews, that there was no way to avert the judgements of God, and to avoid the impending evils which threatened them, but by returning to the Lord, who had begun to smite, and who alone was able to heal them. But this they refused. They preferred their own contrivances; " they " leaned upon an arm of flesh;" sometimes upon Egypt, sometimes upon Assyria; one while presuming upon force; another while upon cunning. They were fruitful in expedients; and, when one broken cistern failed them, had recourse to another.—But the prophet denounces the curse of God both on them and their supports; subjoining the words of my text; which may be understood, either as a farther proof of what he had said, or an assigned cause of that obstinacy and perverseness he had complained of: " The heart is deceit- " ful above all things, and desperately wicked; " who can know it?"

But, without confining the words to the first occasion of their delivery, I shall consider them, as teaching us a doctrine, abundantly confirmed by many other passages of scripture, " that the heart " is deceitful and desperately wicked:" which I shall endeavour to illustrate in a plain familiar way. I shall, secondly, from the next verse, enforce this observation, That the heart (bad as it is) is incessantly under the divine inspection and examination: " I the Lord search the heart and try the reins." I shall, thirdly, consider the issue and design of this inquest; that " every man" may, in the end, receive " according to his ways, and according to the " fruit of his doings." And may the Lord enable us so to try and examine ourselves here, that hereafter we may be found unblameable and without rebuke before him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. The

I. The heart is here characterised, first, As deceitful, and that above or in all things: second, As desperately wicked: in so dangerous, so deplorable a state, as is not to be conceived or found out. "Who can know it?" The word in the original [אנש] which we translate *desperately wicked*, signifies a mortal incurable disease; a disease which, seizing on the vitals, affects and threatens the whole frame; and which no remedy can reach. This idea leads us to that first transgression, whereby man departing from God, fatally destroyed his soul's health, and sunk into that state so pathetically described by Isaiah, chap. i. "The whole head "is sick;" all the powers of the understanding disordered; "and the whole heart faint;" all the springs of the affection enfeebled. "From the "sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no "soundness, but wounds, bruises, and putrifying "sores:" the evil growing worse continually; and no help or helper at hand: "they have not been "closed nor bound up, nor mollified with oint-"ment." In consequence of this deep-rooted disorder, the heart is deceitful;—that is, it deceives and fails us in every instance: it promises more than it can perform: it misleads us with vain desires; and mocks us with unsuccessful efforts; like the faint attempts of a sick man, to perform those actions which require a state of sound health and strength. That this is indeed the case, will (I think) appear from the following particulars; to which I intreat your attention.

Scripture and reason do jointly assure us, that all we see is the work of an Almighty being.—The heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, and even the grass and flowers of the field, loudly proclaim the presence, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God: yet behold the extreme *insensibility* of man! The wisest of our species,

ſpecies, in thoſe places where divine revelation was not known, ever miſtook the *effect* for the *cause*, and aſcribed that honour to the creature which is only due to the Creator. This was the very beſt of the caſe; for, in general, they ſunk ſtill lower, to worſhip ſtocks and ſtones; nay, to the eternal reproach of the natural underſtanding in the things of God, the more civilized any nation was, the more renowned for arts and arms, the farther they were removed from thoſe they termed *barbarians*; ſo much the more vile and contemptible the idolatry they eſtabliſhed generally proved. The wiſdom of the Egyptians paid divine honours to cats, monkies, and the vileſt reptiles. The fine taſte of the Greeks conſecrated thoſe for gods, who, if they had lived amongſt men, would have been deemed the peſts of ſociety; gods who were, profeſſedly, both *patterns* and *patrons* of the moſt ſhameful vices. The proweſs of the Romans eſtabliſhed altars to fear and paleneſs. So deeply were they infatuated, ſo totally loſt to common ſenſe, that the Apoſtle Paul's worſt enemies could find no more plauſible accuſation againſt him, in one of the politeſt cities then in the world, than that he had ventured to affirm, "they were no gods who were made "with hands."

Thus ſtood the caſe with heathens: let us now come nearer home. It is to be feared, the greateſt difference between them and the generality of us called *Chriſtians* is, that we do not partake in their groſs *outward* idolatry. In other reſpects, our inſenſibility is perhaps as much greater than theirs, as our ſuperior knowledge renders it more inexcuſeable. We acknowledge a God; that there is but one; that he is the cauſe of all things; that in him we live, and move, and have our being.——Had the poor Heathens known this, we may judge by their application to the miſtaken worſhip, it would

have had some influence on their practice. But what numbers of "us" live altogether as "without God in the world." I come not here to make invectives; let conscience judge, and give evidence accordingly. What do we think of the perpetual *presence of God* around us, and within us? We know that he is acquainted with all our thoughts, words, and actions; yet are we not more effectually restrained and awed by the presence of our fellow-worms, than by the regard of that eye which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun? How are we affected by the *works of God?* Has not the appearance of a fine day, or the beauty of an extensive prospect, a force to *extort* a sense of satisfaction from every one? but how few are there of us that can realize and acknowledge the hand of the glorious Author of these things? How *seldom*, and how *faintly*, do we adopt the reflection of David? "When I consider the heavens, the work of THY fingers, the moon and the stars which THOU hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?" Psal. viii. What is our judgement of the *word of God*, that glorious message of love, in which he has pointed out to us the way of salvation? Is not this book the least read, the least admired, and the least understood, of any? We are presently affected, we enter with all our spirit into the moving incidents (as we term them) of a romance or tragedy, though we know they are not founded on truth, nor have any relation to ourselves; but we can read the history of Jesus Christ, his life and doctrines, his death and passion, with indifference, though we say, all he spoke, or did, or suffered, was for our sakes. What are our thoughts *of that eternity* to which we are posting, and to which, for aught we know, a few hours may introduce us? Is it not in the power of the meanest

meaneſt trifle that occurs, to hide this important point from our view? It were eaſy to multiply particulars; but are not theſe ſufficient to ſhew the deceitfulneſs, the deſperate wickedneſs, of the heart? Let me add one more: the judgements of God are now abroad in the world for theſe things. We have warnings all around us. We know that many fruitful lands in our neighbourhood are in a manner turned into a wilderneſs, for the ſins of the inhabitants. Every poſt brings us tidings of ſome new deſolation, and we cannot tell how ſoon the caſe may be our own; but we have neither ſympathy for our fellow-creatures, nor concern for ourſelves. We hear, we pity, we forget in the ſame inſtant: but theſe things are remote.——Is, then, what we *ſee* and *feel* more laid to heart? Our friends and acquaintance are taken from amongſt us daily; ſome of them ſuddenly, in the midſt of their warmeſt purſuits, or juſt upon the accompliſhment of their moſt favourite ſchemes: we drop an unmeaning tear, and fly to every officious vanity for relief.—Perhaps we are viſited ourſelves, and brought down to the borders of the grave: but, even againſt this, we are for the moſt part proof; or, if we feel a ſlight impreſſion, it gradually wears off with the diſeaſe; and we return, as ſoon as we recover, to our former follies with redoubled ardour.

This is a ſlight view of the *inſenſibility* of the human heart. Let us now conſider its *ingratitude*. The Iſraelites were a ſample of all mankind in this reſpect. God viſited them, in Egypt, in the midſt of their affliction. Without any application on their part, he undertook and effected their deliverance: He brought them from among their enemies "with a high hand, and a ſtretched-out "arm;" he led them ſafely through the wilderneſs: he ſcreened them with a cloud, from the

piercing beams of the ſun: he gave them light by night, in a pillar of fire: he fed them with bread from heaven, and cauſed ſtreams to flow in the ſandy deſert: he made a covenant with them, and choſe them for his peculiar people: he deſtroyed all their enemies before them: and, at length, put them in the full and peaceable poſſeſſion of a land flowing with milk and honey. Interwoven with the hiſtory of God's gracious dealings with *them*, we have an account of their behaviour towards *him*; which was a continual ſeries of rebellion, perverſeneſs, murmuring, and diſobedience. And are we better than they? In no wiſe. If we had leiſure to conſider the natural, civil, and religious advantages we enjoy as a nation, it would appear, that *we* likewiſe have long been a peculiarly favoured people. The eye of the Lord our God has been upon us continually for good; and we have reaſon to ſay, "He has not dealt ſo with any na-"tion." The hiſtory of all ages and countries affords us no inſtance of national proſperity that can be compared, either for degree or continuance, with what we have enjoyed ſince the Revolution: nor would it be eaſy, I fear, to find a parallel in any hiſtory, of our great ingratitude. What I have ſaid in the former article will neceſſarily infer this: for it is impoſſible that thoſe who have ſo little ſenſibility, either of the value of the gifts of God, or of his hand in beſtowing them, can be grateful. The *ſeat* of ingratitude is in the heart: the *proof* appears in words and actions. Now, what are the prevailing ſubjects of converſation amongſt us? Are the great things that God has done for us, the high obligations we are under to him, the comforts of our holy religion, and the nature of that bleſſed hope ſet before us by the goſpel, in the number? On the contrary, is not the leaſt hint of theſe things in company, for the moſt part, received

received with reserve, if not with contempt and disgust? "Out of the abundance of the heart "the mouth speaketh." God, and the things of God, have little place there; but levity, detraction, ill-temper, and, not seldom, profaneness and obscenity, in our discourses, too plainly discover the nature of the fountain from whence they flow. And if we look upon the actions of men in general, they are but of a piece with their words; engrossed by business, or enslaved to pleasure, for a season, all upon the stretch in amassing treasures; and then perhaps as restless and eager to dissipate them. Whatever passion rules them for the time, or whatever changes they may admit in their schemes, it is too plain, that a principle of gratitude to God, and a conscious desire to please him, has little influence either in forming or executing their plans. If these things are so, we have another instance of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart: it is full of the blackest ingratitude.

Need any thing be added to these two charges? Have we not said enough to confirm the prophet's assertion? if not, we can name a third particular, if possible, more absurd and inexcuseable than either of the former. Man is not only insensible of the greatest part of those things which most concern him, and ungrateful and disobedient to his Maker and Preserver, his best and only Friend, but he is *proud* too. Though he has nothing but what he has received, has received nothing but what he has perverted and mismanaged, and must render a strict account of his mismanagement, yet he is *proud*. We have already seen his blindness and baseness; there wanted only pride to make him a monster indeed. And need we spend time to prove this? No. *This* at least is an universal evil. Any man may easily perceive it in every man but himself;

ſelf: and every *thinking* man may perceive it working within himſelf inceſſantly. Whether we are alone or in company, whether with friends or enemies, with thoſe above us or thoſe below us, pride will inſinuate. Nay, in the immediate preſence of God, when we come together to implore his mercy, while the moſt humbling confeſſions are upon our lips, and we are charging ourſelves as moſt miſerable, helpleſs ſinners, even here pride will find us out. Thoſe muſt be great ſtrangers to themſelves who are not ſenſible of this. Now, "why is duſt "and aſhes proud?" proud of our failings! proud of our infirmities! Is it not from hence, becauſe the heart is deplorably diſeaſed, deſperately wicked, and deeply deceitful?

I ſhall purſue this point no farther. I ſhall not attempt to enumerate, at preſent, theſe "evil "thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theſts, "and blaſphemies," Mark, vii. 21. which our Lord aſſures us do perpetually "proceed from "the heart." I choſe to inſiſt on inſenſibility, ingratitude, and pride; becauſe theſe are the vices which, in common life, we muſt condemn, are willing to think ourſelves moſt free from, and can the leaſt bear to be charged with. And it muſt be allowed, that, between man and man, there is often the appearance of much generoſity, gratitude, and condeſcenſion. But what will it avail us, that we ſtand upon ſome tolerable terms towards each other in theſe reſpects, if we are guilty before God? "The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth," 1 Sam. xvi. 7.: he cannot be deceived or put off with a fair appearance; for he "ſearcheth the heart, and trieth the "reins." This is the next point to be conſidered.

II. That the heart, with all its workings, and all its faults, is inceſſantly under the divine inſpection and examination: "I the Lord ſearch the heart, and "try

" try the reins." The *heart* and *reins*, as diſtinguiſhed in ſcripture-phraſe, ſignify thoſe different powers of the mind, the affections and the thoughts. The words *ſearch* and *try* have an emphaſis in the original, which cannot be reached without a paraphraſe, if at all.

The Lord *ſearches* [חקר] the heart: he traces, inveſtigates, the inmoſt principle of our ſouls to their firſt riſe, with (if I may ſo ſpeak) a mathematical accuracy. He *tries* [כחן] the reins: he watches every riſing thought; he brings it to the teſt of his moſt pure law; he examines it with the utmoſt exactneſs; as a refiner eſſays his metals, with a purpoſe to reject whatever is inferior to the preſcribed ſtandard. To form a more juſt idea of this ſcrutiny, let us aſk ourſelves, how we could bear to be obliged to declare aloud, in full company, every thought which paſſes through our minds, every wiſh and deſire of which we are conſcious, without the leaſt reſerve or exception? I am perſuaded there are few people ſo loſt to ſhame, but, if they were brought to this trial, they would rather chuſe to die than comply with it. Some things they would perceive, eſpecially upon ſuch a provocation, which they could hardly, upon any terms, prevail with themſelves to expreſs. The Lord has mercifully kept us from the knowledge of each other's hearts, any farther than we are willing to diſcloſe ourſelves: for was every man compelled to ſpeak all he thinks, there would be an end of ſociety; and man would no more venture to dwell with man, than with tigers and bears. We know what miſchief one ungoverned tongue may ſometimes occaſion: now, the tongue can do no evil, any farther than as it is an inſtrument of diſcloſing the hidden things of the heart; yet it is but a ſmall part of theſe the worſt tongue is capable of diſcloſing. What then would be the caſe,

fall our hearts were open, all our desires known to one another? What a mixture of confusion and defiance, shame, rage, fear, and contempt, would overspread every countenance! and yet thus we are exposed to the searching eye of a pure and holy God! The Lord knows the thoughts of man's heart, that they are vain. He long ago declared the result of his observation: "God saw "the wickedness of man was great in the earth; "and that every imagination of the thoughts of "his heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. And though the world was drowned for this, matters were not mended afterwards: for, upon a second survey, the judgement amounts to the same: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the "children of men, to see if there were any that "did understand, and seek God. They are all "gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; "there is none that doeth good, no, not one. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their "tongues they have used deceit, the poison of "asps is under their lips," Ps. xiv. Is. liv. Compare Rom. iii. How it was in our blessed Saviour's time, we have already observed; and neither scripture nor experience give us reason to hope it has been better since, or is now. The Apostle Paul has assured us, "That, in the last days, (a cha-"racter, which it is likely coincides with our days), "perilous times shall come. For men shall be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, "proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, un-"thankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-"breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, "despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, "high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lo-"vers of God: having a form of godliness, but "denying the power thereof," 2 Tim iii.—Surely, I say, if these are marks of the *last days*, they must

muſt be already commenced. However, we ſee, upon the whole, how vile and hateful our hearts muſt appear in the ſight of a heart-ſearching God.

III. One thing more we have to conſider: That the Lord does not obſerve the heart of man with the indifference of a mere ſpectator, but as an impartial and inflexible judge; "that he may give every "man according to his ways, and according to the "fruit of his doings." This was the third particular to be ſpoken to.

But, alas! what can be ſaid to this? Is it not ſufficient to fill our ſouls with aſtoniſhment, and to cauſe *all faces to gather blackness!* to hear, that the Lord has purpoſed to render to every man according to his works; and that he ſits judge, not only upon outward actions, but examines the very thoughts and intents of the heart? Dare any of *us* abide the iſſue of ſuch a trial? Which of us will preſume to ſay, I am clean? To what purpoſe can any of us plead, I have not committed adultery, if God charges us with every inordinate deſire, with every offence of the eye? What will it avail, that we have never aſſaulted the life of our neighbour, if every angry word, every degree of ill-will or revenge, is conſidered as murder in God's ſight? It will not ſuffice to ſay, I am no thief or extortioner, unleſs we can clear ourſelves of the moſt diſtant wiſh of poſſeſſing what was the property of another. If we are ſure that we have not forſworn ourſelves, but have performed to the Lord our oaths, it is only thus far well, that we ſhall not be condemned for open and actual perjury. But if we have at any time mentioned, or even *thought* of the name of God, without the higheſt habitual reverence, we have taken his name in vain; and he has declared he will not hold us guiltleſs. That this is no gloſs of my inventing, but the very words of truth, the declaration of

him by whom we must be one day judged, the 5th chapter of Matthew will inform you. There a wanton glance is styled adultery; an angry expression censured as murder; and to speak unadvisedly even of the hairs of our head, is deemed a branch of profane swearing. And why? because all these spring from the heart, which is "naked and open," without either covering or concealment, "in the sight of him with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. This is thought uncomfortable doctrine; and not without reason, could we go no farther. For there is nothing in heaven or in earth, in time or eternity, that affords the least glimpse of comfort to fallen man, if either God is strict to mark what is amiss, or if he, trusting in himself, presumes to plead with his Maker. The divine law requires perfect, unremitted, unsinning obedience: it denounces a curse upon the least failure: "Cursed "is every one that continueth not in all things "which are written in the book of the law, to do "them," Gal. iii. 10.; *every one*, without exception of person or circumstance, *that continueth not*, from the beginning to the end of life. *in all things*, great and small, *to do them*, του ποιησαι αυτα, to finish them, to do them completely, without any defect either in matter or manner. Most uncomfortable doctrine indeed, were there no remedy provided! For the law of God is as eternal and unchangeable as his nature: it must not, it cannot be attempered or brought down to our capacities; neither can the penalty be evaded: for the God of truth has said, has "sworn, That the soul that "sinneth shall die," Ezek. xviii. 4. Here, then, we must receive "a sentence of death in ourselves;" 2 Cor. i. 9. Here, "every mouth must be stopped, "and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. Here we must say, with the apostle, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there "shall

" shall be no flesh justified in his sight," Gal. ii 16.: " for by the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. iii. 20. O that we could all sincerely say so; that we were brought to this, to feel and confess our lost undone estate, and our utter inability to save ourselves! then with joy should I proceed to what I have had in my eye all along. For with what view have I said so much upon so disagreeable a subject? why have I attempted to lay open some of the depths of the heart? but that I might more fully illustrate the wonderful grace and goodness of God, vouchsafed to us in the gospel; and at the same time shew the utter impossibility, not of being saved at all, but of finding salvation in any other way than that which God has appointed For, behold! " God has so loved the world," John, iii. that he sent his Son to accomplish that for us, " which the law could not do through the weak- " ness of our flesh," Rom. viii. Jesus Christ performed perfect obedience to the law of God in our behalf; he died, and satisfied the penalty due to our sins; he rose from the grave as our representative; he is entered into heaven as our fore-runner. " He has received gifts for men, even for " the rebellious," Psal. lxviii. He is " exalted" on high, to " bestow repentance and remission of " sins," Acts, v. on all that seek to him. He has established his ordinances for this purpose: he has commanded his people not to " neglect assembling " themselves together." He has charged his ministers at such seasons to declare first the guilty, deplorable condition of mankind, and then to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, " by faith which " is in him." He has promised to be with them in this work to the end of the world. He has promised, that where his word is faithfully preached, he will accompany it " with a spirit and power" that will bear down all opposition. He has pro-

miss, hat while we are speaking to the ear, he will, by his secret influence, apply it to the heart, and open it to receive and embrace the truth spoken, as in the case of Lydia. Who would venture to preach a doctrine so unpalatable to the carnal mind, as Jesus Christ, and him crucified? Who would undertake so ungrateful a task as to depreciate that noble creature *man*, and arraign him publicly of insensibility, ingratitude, pride, and deceit; were it not that we have, first a *command*, and that at our peril, to speak plain; and, secondly, a *promise* that we shall not speak in vain? Not that we can expect to be universally received: The time *is* come, when many "will not endure sound "doctrine," 2 Tim. iv. 3.: but some there will be, whom God is pleased to save by the *foolishness of preaching*, so called. Some such I would hope are in this assembly. To such I say, Think not to satisfy the divine justice by any poor performances of your own; think not to cleanse or expiate the evil of your hearts by any of your own inventions; but "behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the "sins of the world," John, i. 29. He died, that you may live: he lives, that you may live for ever. Put therefore your trust in the Lord; for with him is plenteous redemption. His sufferings and death are a complete final propitiation for sin. "He is able to save to the uttermost;" and he is as willing as he is able. It was *this* brought him down from heaven; for *this* he emptied himself of all glory, and submitted to all indignity. His humiliation expiates our pride; his perfect love atones for our ingratitude; his exquisite tenderness pleads for our insensibility. Only believe; commit your cause to him by faith and prayer. As a *Priest*, he shall make atonement for your sins, and present your persons and your services acceptable before God. As a *Prophet*, he shall instruct you in the true

true wisdom, which maketh wise to salvation; he shall not only cause you to know his commandments, but to love them too: he shall write them in your hearts. As a *King*, he shall evermore mightily defend you against all your enemies. He shall enable you to withstand temptations, to support difficulties, to break through all opposition. He shall supply you with every thing you need, for this life or a better, out of the unsearchable riches of his grace. He shall strengthen you to overcome all things; to endure to the end; and then he shall give you a place in his kingdom; a seat near his throne; a crown of life; a crown of glory; incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

SER.

SERMON II.

ON THE SAVIOUR, AND HIS SALVATION.

1 Tim. i. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

THOUGH the Apostle Paul has wrote largely and happily upon every branch of Christian doctrine and practice; and with respect to his writings, as well as his preaching, could justly assert, "That he had not shunned to declare the whole coun-"sel of God;" yet there are two points which seem to have been (if I may so speak) his favourite topics, which he most frequently repeats, most copiously insists on, and takes every occasion of introducing. The one is, to display the honours, power, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, to make known the great things God had done for his own soul. How his heart was filled and fired with the first of these, is evident from almost every chapter of his epistles. When he speaks of the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in "the flesh," and the exceeding grace and love declared to a lost world through him, the utmost powers of language fall short of his purpose. With a noble freedom he soars beyond the little bounds of criticism; and, finding the most expressive words too weak and faint for his ideas, he forms and compounds new ones, heaps one hyperbole upon another; yet, after his most laboured essays to do justice to his subject, he often breaks off in a manner that shews he was far from being satisfied

satisfied with all he could say. This reflection is most obvious to those who can read him in the *original:* but no disadvantages of a translation can wholly confine that inimitable ardour with which he seems to pour his whole soul into his words, when he is speaking of his Lord and Saviour. And he who can read the first chapters of his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, the second to the Philippians, or many similiar passages, with indifference, must be, I say, not merely a person of small devotion, but of little taste and sensibility.

And how deeply his mind was impressed with the mercies he had received in his conversion and call, is equally conspicuous. He takes every occasion to aggrandize the goodness of God to himself; to exaggerate and deplore the guilt and misery of his former life, in which he once trusted; and to lament the small returns he was able to make for such blessings; even when he could say, without boasting, that he had "laboured more abundantly" than the most diligent and zealous of his fellow-servants.

A powerful abiding sense of these two points upon the apostle's mind, have given rise to many sudden, lively, and beautiful digressions in the course of his writings. The context to the passage I have read is of this kind. Having incidentally spoken of the gospel in the 11th verse, he is suddenly struck with the reflection of his own misery while ignorant of it, and the wonderful goodness of God, in affording him the knowledge of salvation, and honouring him, who was before a blasphemer, with a commission to publish the same glad tidings to others. This thought suspends his argument, and fills his heart and mouth with praise. And having acknowledged, that "the grace of our Lord was "exceeding abundant" towards himself, he subjoins

joins the words of the text, for an encouragement to others; assuring us, that his case was not so peculiar, but that multitudes might be partakers with him in the same hope of mercy.

The words easily resolve into two parts:

1*st*, A short, but comprehensive proposition, including the purport of the whole gospel, "That "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2*d*. A commendation of this doctrine in a twofold respect, "as a faithful saying," and as "worthy of all acceptation;" each of these illustrated by the instance of himself, when he adds, "of whom "I am chief."

I. The apostle well knew the different reception the gospel would meet in the world; that many poor guilty souls, trembling under a sense of sin and unworthiness, would very hardly be persuaded, that such sinners as they could be saved at all. To these he recommends it as "a faithful saying," founded upon the immutable counsel, promise, and oath of God, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*; sinners in general; "the chief of sinners;" such as he represents himself to have been. He knew likewise, that many others, from a mistaken opinion of their own goodness, or a mistaken dependence on something of their own chusing, would be liable to undervalue this faithful saying. For the sake of these, he adds, "it is worthy of all ac-"ceptation." None are so bad but the gospel affords them a ground of hope; none are so good as to have any just ground of hope without it. There was a time when St Paul could have made a fair profession of himself likewise; he could say, "circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of "Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of "the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to "the righteousness which is by the law, blame-"less," Phil. iii. But he has been since taught,

"to

" to count all things but loſs for the excellency of " the knowledge of Chriſt;" and is content to ſtyle himſelf *the chief of ſinners.*

Having thus attempted to ſhew the deſign and meaning of the words, I propoſe, ſomething more at large, to unfold the propoſition, and point out ſome of thoſe important and extenſive truths it contains. I ſay, *ſome of them;* for it is not poſſible that either men or angels can fully ſound the depth of this one ſentence, " that Jeſus Chriſt came into " the world to ſave ſinners." I ſhall afterwards *infer*, and *enforce* the other part of the text, " that " it is indeed a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all " acceptation." And may He, who came into the world to procure ſalvation for ſinners, and is now exalted on high to beſtow it, accompany the whole with his promiſed bleſſing.

The tenor of the propoſition readily ſuggeſts three inquiries. 1*ſt*, Who this perſon is, here ſpoken of, Jeſus Chriſt? 2*d*, What is meant by the ſalvation he is ſaid to have undertaken? 3*d*, By what means he effected it?

Let us, *firſt*, ſpeak of this gracious, this wonderful perſon, Jeſus Chriſt. We already bear his name as profeſſed Chriſtians; and we ſpeak of him as *our Maſter*, and *our Lord;* and ſo far we ſay well. But, as he has told us, many will call him *Lord* at the great day, to whom he will profeſs, " I " never knew you whence you are, depart;" ſo it is to be feared there are many *now*, that outwardly acknowledge him, who neither know *whence* he is, nor *who* he is. Though we have Moſes and the prophets, the apoſtles and evangeliſts, continually with us; though it is the immediate aim and intent of all their writings, in every hiſtory, promiſe, prophecy, type, ceremony, and law, to ſet *him* before our eyes; and though there is hardly an image in the material creation but is adopted by the

ſcriptures

ſcriptures to ſhadow forth his excellency; ignorance of Jeſus Chriſt, and what he has done for his people, is the great cauſe that religion appears ſo *low* and *contemptible* to ſome, and is found ſo *tedious* and *burdenſome* by others. Let us therefore attend *to the record God has given of his Son;* for I propoſe in this article to ſay little of my own, but to lay before you the expreſs, powerful, indubitable teſtimony of holy ſcripture.

And here we are taught, 1*st*, *That Jeſus Chriſt is God.* The firſt words of St John's goſpel are full to this point: "In the beginning" (that is, at the commencement of time and things, when as yet nothing elſe exiſted) "was the Word, and the "Word was with God, and the Word was God." To prevent a poſſibility of miſtake, and to confirm the eternity of this divine Word in the ſtrongeſt manner, it is immediately added, "the ſame was "in the beginning with God. All things were "made by him." And, leſt this likewiſe ſhould be either conteſted or miſunderſtood, it is guarded by an univerſal negative, "without him was not "any thing made that was made." Further, to prevent, if poſſible, the ſurmiſe, that, in theſe glorious words, the eternal Word acted with a deputed power only, the apoſtle ſubjoins, "In him was "life," life eſſentially; and from him, as the fountain, life and light proceeded to his creatures: "In him was life, and that life was the light of "men." To this agrees the declaration of St Paul: "For by him were all things created that are in "heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible, "whether thrones, or dominions, or principali-"ties, or powers, all things were created by him "and for him;" (*by* his power and wiſdom, *for* his glory and pleaſure). "And he is before all "things, and by him all things conſiſt," Col. i. Elſewhere he ſpeaks of him expreſsly, as "over all,

"God

" God bleſſed for ever; who upholdeth all things " by the word of his power; the ſame yeſterday, " to-day, and for ever." It were eaſy to enlarge this way; but I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving this general proof of the divinity of Chriſt, that the ſcriptures, which were given to make us wiſe to ſalvation, do aſcribe to him the names of God, particularly *Jehovah*; the eſſential attributes of God ſuch as *Eternity*, *Omnipreſence*, *Omnipotence*; the peculiar works of God, as *Creation*, *Providence*, *Redemption*, and *Forgiveneſs of Sin*; and, finally, commands us to pay him thoſe *divine* honours, and to rely on him with that *abſolute dependence*, which would be idolatry if referred any where below the Supreme Majeſty of heaven and earth.

Again, we learn from ſcripture, that *Chriſt* is truly and properly *Man*. This is indeed wonderful! therefore ſtyled, " the great myſtery of godli- " neſs," 1 Tim. iii. But that he, of whom we have begun to ſpeak, is the very perſon who came into the world to ſave ſinners, we have abundant proof. The Apoſtle John, whoſe teſtimony we have already cited, ſays, a few verſes lower, John, i. 14. " And the Word" (that glorious Word, which was God with God) " was made fleſh, and dwelt a- " mongſt us, and we beheld his glory;" (that is, we his diſciples, whoſe eyes were ſpiritually enlightened, for the world in general ſaw nothing of it); " as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, " full of grace and truth." In other places it is ſaid, " Himſelf took our infirmities, and bore our " ſickneſſes," Matth. viii. 16.; and was in all points " tempted as we are, yet without ſin," Heb. iv. 15. " As the children are partakers of fleſh and blood, " he alſo himſelf likewiſe took part of the ſame," Heb. ii. 14. " In the fulneſs of time, God ſent " forth his Son, made of a woman," Gal. iv. Many are the miſtakes of mortals, and wide the extremes

extremes into which miſtaken mortals run! Some have raſhly ventured to deny our Lord's divinity; ſome have wildly and fancifully explained away his humanity; but may we, through grace, abide by the ſcriptural truth, and be directed in the midſt of the path of judgement.

From this myſtical union of the divine and human nature in one perſon, the ſcriptures ſpeak of him, thirdly, under the character of a *Mediator*, the "one Mediator between God and man." To this idea the names *Jeſus Chriſt*, which are as ointment poured forth, direct us in their original import. The former, which ſignifies the *Saviour*, pointing out the ſucceſs and efficacy of his undertaking; the latter, which is the ſame with *Meſſiah* or the *Anointed*, expreſſing both his divine appointment thereto, and the complete ſupply of all grace and power, wherewith he was filled for the diſcharge of it. Thus much for the perſon ſpoken of.

We proceed, in the next place, to conſider the deſign of his appearance in the world, "to ſave "ſinners." And as the idea of *deliverance* preſuppoſes a ſtate of *diſtreſs*, it will be neceſſary previouſly to inquire into the condition of thoſe whom he came to ſave; which is indeed emphatically implied in the appellation given them, *ſinners*. Man having broken that law under which he was created, and with which his happineſs was cloſely connected, fell under accumulated ruin. The image of God, in which he was formed, was defaced, and a far different image ſet up in his heart, even of him who had ſeduced him from his allegiance; darkneſs in the underſtanding, rebellion in the will, ſenſuality in the affections; the juſtice of God threatening a penalty he could neither ſatisfy nor ſuſtain; the commandments of God ſtill challenging an obedience he had no longer any power to yield,

yield. The very gifts and bounties of God, with which he was encompaſſed, deſigned not only for his comfort, but his inſtruction, to lead him, as by ſo many ſteps, to their gracious author, became eventually the occaſions of withdrawing him farther from his duty, and increaſing as well as aggravating his ingratitude. Thus ſtood man towards his Maker. With regard to his fellow-creatures, ſelf-love and inordinate deſires having raiſed a variety of interfering intereſts in the breaſts of all, peace withdrew from the earth. Every man's heart and hand was ſet againſt his neighbour; and violence, rage, envy, and confuſion, overſpread the world. Nor could he be eaſier in himſelf; hurried by reſtleſs deſires towards things either unſatisfying or unattainable, haunted with cares, tortured with pains, tired with oppoſition, ſhocked with diſappointment; Conſcience, like the hand that appeared at Belſhazzar's feaſt, (Daniel, v.) writing bitter things againſt him, when outward circumſtances allowed a ſhort repoſe; and Vanity, like a worm, deſtroying the root of every flower that promiſed the faireſt bloom of ſucceſs. Behold a few outlines of the picture of fallen man! Miſerable in his life, more miſerable in the continual dread of loſing *such a* life, miſerable, moſt of all, that neither his fancy can feign, nor his fear conceive, the conſequences of the death he dreads; which will introduce him to the immediate preſence, to the *tribunal*, of an incenſed, almighty, ever-living God!

Such was the ſtate from which Jeſus Chriſt came to ſave us. He came to reſtore us to the favour of God; to reconcile us to ourſelves, and to each other; to give us peace and joy in life, hope and triumph in death, and after death glory, honour, and immortality. For he came not merely to repair, and to reſtore, but to exalt; not only "that we "might have life," the life we had forfeited, but

"that

" that we might have it more abundantly," John, x.; that our happineſs might be more exalted, our title more firm, and our poſſeſſion more ſecure, than the ſtate of Adam in paradiſe could boaſt, or than his poſterity could have attained unto, if he had continued unſinning upon the tenor of the firſt covenant.

Now, could we ſuppoſe it poſſible, that a ſet of innocent beings, without any default of their own, had ſunk into a ſtate of miſery, we muſt confeſs it would have been great grace and favour in the Lord Jeſus to ſave them. But let us not forget the ſtreſs laid in the text upon the word *ſinners*. He came to ſave, not the *unfortunate*, but the *ungodly*, Romans, v. How then ſhould every heart glow with love to him, who hath thus loved us! If any of *us* can hear or ſpeak of this ſubject with indifference, or diſguſt, it is to be feared we are quite ſtrangers to the *nature*, or the *neceſſity*, of that ſalvation with which God has graciouſly viſited his people. Let us no more uſurp the ſacred words of *generoſity*, *ſenſibility*, or *gratitude*, if this aſtoniſhing inſtance of divine goodneſs leaves us cold and unimpreſſed; eſpecially if to this we join the conſideration of the third point I propoſed to ſpeak of, By what means Jeſus Chriſt affected this ſalvation for ſinners.

In the paſſage before us, it is only ſaid, that he *came into the world* on this account; which teaches us, *this* was the ſole deſign of his advent; and that, coming on ſet purpoſe for this, he would leave nothing undone that was neceſſary to accompliſh it. He emptied himſelf of that divine glory and honour he poſſeſſed with the Father from eternity. " He bowed the heavens, and came down" to our earth; and that not with an external glory, as a celeſtial meſſenger, to conſtrain the attention and homage of mankind, " but was made of a wo-

" man,"

" man," Gal. iv.; not of high and noble extraction in the judgement of men, " but in the form " of a ſervant;" born in a ſtable, laid in a manger, brought up in an obſcure and contemptible place, and reputed no higher than the ſon of a carpenter. " He was deſpiſed and rejected of " men; there was no form or comelineſs in him," Iſa. liii. to attract a general regard; on the contrary, " he came to his own, and his own received " him not," John, i. Farther, as he was made of a woman, " he was made under the law;" the one in order to the other; for this was the way divine wiſdom had appointed, and which divine juſtice required, to make ſalvation poſſible to ſinners. Eternal truth had pronounced tribulation, wrath, and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil. All men, in every age and place, " had " corrupted their ways before God;" yet his mercy had deſigned, " that where ſin had abounded, " grace ſhould much more abound, Rom. viii. Jeſus Chriſt was the grand expedient, in whom " mercy and truth met together," Pſal. lxxxv. and the inflexible *righteouſness* of God was brought to correſpond and harmonize with the peace of ſinful man. That juſtice might be ſatisfied, truth vindicated, and ſinners ſaved, " God ſo loved a loſt " world," that, when no inferior means could avail, when none in heaven or earth were *willing*, or *worthy*, or *able*, to interpoſe, " he gave his on- " ly-begotten Son," John, iii. Jeſus Chriſt, the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and expreſs image of his perſon, " ſo loved the world," that he aſſumed our nature, undertook our cauſe, bore our ſins, ſuſtained our deſerved puniſhment; and, having done and ſuffered all that the caſe required, he is now gone before, " to prepare a place," John, iv. for all that believe in him and obey him. Man lay under a double incapacity for happineſs;

he

he could neither keep the law of God in future, nor satisfy for his past breach and contempt of it. To obviate the former, Jesus Christ performed a perfect unsinning obedience in our stead. To remove the latter, he became "the propitiation of "our sins;" yielded up his life as a prey into the hands of murderers, and poured forth his precious blood, in drops of sweat in the garden, in streams from his side upon the cross. For this he endured the fiercest temptations of the devil, the scorn, rage, and malice of men, and drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin. His love carried him through all; and when he had finally overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In few words, he lived and died for us when upon earth; nor is he unmindful of us in heaven, but lives and intercedes on our behalf. He continually executes the offices of prophet, priest, and king, to his people; instructing them by his word and Spirit; presenting their persons and prayers, acceptable to God through his merits; defending them by his power, from all their enemies, ghostly and bodily; and ordering, by his providence, all things to work together for their good, till at length they are brought home, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

II. From what has been said, we may justly infer, in the first place, "that this is," as the apostle styles it, "a faithful saying." When man first fell, God, "in the midst of judgment remembering mercy," declared, unsought and undesired, "that the seed "of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. In every succeeding age, he confirmed his purpose by types, promises, prophecies, and oaths. At length, in the fulness of time, Christ, "the

" the desire of all nations," came into the world, fulfilled all that had been foretold, and encouraged every humbly penitent sinner to come unto him, that they might have life, pardon, and peace. To doubt, or to deny, his readiness to save, is, so far as in us lies, to " make the word of God of " none effect;" it is, " to charge God foolishly," as though, like the heedless unskilful builder in the gospel, he had begun to build that which was not to be finished. If, after all that is set before us, it is possible for any soul to miss salvation, that sincerely desires it, and seeks it in God's appointed way, it must be because the Lord Jesus Christ either *cannot* or *will not* save them. That he cannot, is flatly false; for, " all power is his in heaven " and in earth," Matth. xxviii.; and it is particularly said, " that he is able to save unto the utter- " most all that come unto God by him," Heb. vii.: and that he will not, is as false; for he himself hath said, " Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no " wise cast out," John, vi.

We may infer, 2dly, That this doctrine is not only faithful, but " worthy of all acceptation." And here methinks I could begin anew. A point so much mistaken by some, and neglected by most, rather requires a whole, or many discourses, than to be passed over in few words. The most high and wise God has esteemed the redemption of mankind so precious, " that he spared not his only " Son," Rom. viii.—And are there any amongst us, in a land of gospel-light and liberty, where the words of wisdom are sounding in our ears every day, that dare make light of this message, just give it a hearing, and return to their farms, their merchandise, and their diversions, as though this unspeakable grace of God called for no return? Alas! " How shall we escape if we neglect this sal- " vation?" Heb. ii. " He that despised Moses'

" law died without mercy." It was dangerous, it was deſtructive, to refuſe him that ſpoke upon earth; take heed how you trifle with him " that " ſpeaketh from heaven!" To ſuch as neglect this, " there remains no other ſacrifice for ſin, " but a certain fearful looking for of fiery in- " dignation that ſhall devour his adverſaries," Heb. x. Let none of us think it is well with us, merely becauſe we were born and educated in a Chriſtian country, have means of inſtruction in our hands, and enjoy frequent opportunities of preſenting ourſelves before God in public worſhip. To thouſands theſe, ſo far from being advantages, will greatly aggravate their condemnation, and point the ſting of the never-dying worm. Better were it for us to have been inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Luke, x. yea of Sodom and Gomorrah, than to appear in judgement with no better plea than this. Neither let us ſpeak peace to ourſelves, becauſe we are not ſo bad as others, but perhaps live decently and comfortably, are uſeful in ſociety, and perform many things that are commonly called *good works*. If theſe works ſpring from a true love of God, if they are framed according to the rule of his word, if they are performed by faith in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, they are undoubtedly good, and ſhall be rewarded before men and angels; if otherwiſe, you have already your reward, in the complacence of your own minds, and the approbation of friends and acquaintance. The Chriſtianity of the New Teſtament imports more than all this. It is, to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; to believe in him, as to obey him in all his commands, to truſt him in all his diſpenſations, to walk in his ſteps, copying out the bright example of his love, meekneſs, patience, ſelf-denial, and active zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind.—It is, from a conſciouſneſs of our utter inability

bility to perform these great things, to depend continually upon the promised aid and direction of his Holy Spirit, to seek this assistance by frequent fervent prayer, to offer up ourselves daily as living sacrifices unto God;—and, finally, when we have done all, to be deeply sensible of our unworthiness of the least of his mercies, to confess ourselves unprofitable servants, and to place all our hopes upon this faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into "the world to save sinners."

Thus, from the consideration of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatness of our misery by nature, and the wonderful things he has done and suffered for our redemption, we may learn the complete security of that salvation he has provided, the extreme danger of neglecting it, and the folly and presumption of attempting to establish a righteousness of our own, independent of him "who is appointed of God unto us, wisdom, "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. In setting these things before you plainly and faithfully, I trust I have delivered my own soul. Time is short, life is precarious, and perhaps to some this may be the last opportunity of the kind that may be afforded them; God grant we may be wise in time, "that, to-day, while it "is called to-day," we may hear his voice. Then we shall understand more of the test than words can teach us; then we shall experience "a peace "which passeth all understanding," Phil. iv.; "a "joy" which "a stranger intermeddleth not with," Prov. xvi.; and a hope "full of glory," which shall be completed in the endless possession of those "pleasures which are at the right hand of God," Psal. xvi.; where sin, and its inseparable attendant sorrow, shall cease for ever; where "there shall "be no more grief, or pain, or fear," Rev. xxi.; but every tear shall be wiped from every eye.

SERMON III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

ACTS, xi. 26. latter part.

——*And the disciples were called* Chriſtians *firſt at Antioch.*

THE Evangeliſt Luke having contributed his appointed part to the hiſtory of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, proceeds, in the book we ſtyle *the Acts of the Apoſtles*, to inform us of the ſtate and behaviour of thoſe faithful followers he left behind him on earth, when he aſcended in the name and behalf of his people, to that heaven from whence his love had brought him down. We are informed, that the gracious promiſes he had made while he was yet with them, began ſoon to take place; for, "when the day of Pentecoſt was "fully come," Acts, ii. the Holy Spirit deſcended powerfully upon them, qualified them for preaching the goſpel to the whole world, and gave them an earneſt of ſucceſs in making their firſt eſſay the happy means of converting about "three thouſand "ſouls."

The firſt believers, "who were of one heart "and one ſoul, who continued ſtedfaſt in the "apoſtles doctrine, and had all things in com-"mon," would probably have been well content to have lived together in Jeruſalem, till death had ſucceſſively tranſplanted them to the Jeruſalem which is above. But this was not to be their reſt: and their Lord, who had appointed them to be "the ſalt of the earth," and "the light of the "world," Matth. v. made uſe of the rage of their enemies

enemies to effect that separation which those who are united by the grace of God are often so loth to yield to. Little did Herod and the Jews consider what would be the consequence of the persecution they raised against the church of Christ: but persecutors are always blind, and counteract their own designs.—So here; for we are told, that those whom they scattered abroad, "went every "where preaching the word." Thus, the word of the Lord "ran and was glorified;" their bitterest enemies contributing to push it forward, till in a few years it was published "from sea to sea," and "from the river to the ends of the earth," Psal. lxxii.

For a while these faithful followers of the Lamb were known only by particular names, according to the different humours of different places,—*Nazarenes, Galileans, the people of that way, pestilent fellows*, and the like: but at length, when they grew more numerous, when their societies were regularly formed, and their enemies universally alarmed, they began to bear a more general and emphatical name. St Luke has informed us, that this was the case in fact; and has likewise told us where it first obtained; and as I suppose he did not this without some design, I shall endeavour to draw some observations for our use and direction, from this remark in the text, "That the disciples "were called Christians first at Antioch," which I shall divide into two: thus,—That the first general name by which the disciples were distinguished from the world, and united among themselves, was that of *Christians*; and, secondly, That this took place first at Antioch. Thus the propositions lie in the text; but, in treating of each, it may be more convenient to invert this order, and consider the latter as previous to the other.

Now, if we consider the state of the city of Antioch,

tioch, *before, at the time,* and *since,* the event which is here recorded; from each of these views we may gather some lesson of instruction for ourselves; which ought to be our view in all we read, but especially when we read those books "which "are able to make us wise unto salvation," and where no one sentence is insignificant. But let us not forget, with all we read and hear concerning religion, to mingle our frequent prayers to the great Author and Fountain of all grace, for that aid and assistance of his Holy Spirit, without which we can do nothing to advantage.

Antioch, the capital of Syria, built about three hundred years before Christ, had been long the most flourishing city of the East: the most remarkable circumstance of its ancient state, as suiting our present purpose, was its having been the seat and residence of Antiochus, the most cruel and inveterate enemy of the church and people of God; the most direct and eminent type of that Antichrist who was afterwards to appear in the world; spoken of expressly by prophecy in Daniel, chap. xi.; the completion of which you may see at large in the first book of Maccabees, in Josephus, and more briefly in the 79th and 80th Psalms. But behold the wisdom, the power, and the providence of God! when his people were brought low, he helped them; he set those bounds to the rage of the adversary which could not be broken through; and, at length, in his appointed time, he erected *this* first general standard of the gospel, upon the very spot where his grand enemy had so long encamped, and from whence his pernicious counsels and enterprises had so far proceeded. The application of this is very suitable to the times in which we now live. We see a powerful combination against the Protestant interest. Our enemies are many and mighty: their designs, we have reason

ſon to believe, are deep laid, and their efforts unwearied. Once and again our hopes have been almoſt ſwallowed up; and though we, through the ſingular goodneſs of God, have hitherto eſcaped, the ſtorm has fallen heavy upon our brethren abroad. What may be the *immediate* iſſue of the preſent threatening appearances, we know not; but we may encourage ourſelves from the experience of paſt ages, as well as from the ſure promiſes of ſcripture, that however the "kings of the earth "may aſſemble, and the rulers take counſel toge-"ther," Pſal. ii. God "has a hook in their noſe, "and a bridle in their jaws," Iſa. xxxvii.; and all their force and policy ſhall at laſt bring about what they leaſt deſire and intend,—the welfare and glory of God's church. He that cauſed the Chriſtian name go forth firſt at Antioch, where the truth of God had been moſt eminently and ſucceſsfully oppoſed, can likewiſe introduce a temper and worſhip *truly Christian*, in thoſe places which at preſent ſeem deſtitute of either. And for this it is our duty continually to pray.

Again, if we conſider the ſtate of Antioch at the time the diſciples were firſt called *Christians* there, we may learn how to form a judgement of our profeſſion. This city was then luxurious and diſſolute to a proverb, even in Aſia, where luxury and effeminacy were univerſally prevalent. Whether this name was aſſumed by the diſciples, or impoſed by their enemies, we cannot doubt but that, in common repute, it was a term of the moſt extreme reproach and ignominy. Nor can I ſuppoſe the worſt appellations any ſect in ſucceeding ages has been doomed to bear, have implied half of that contempt which an inhabitant of Antioch or Dapane expreſſed when he called a man a *Chriſtian*. If we imagine a ſet of people, who, at this time, in France, ſhould ſtyle themſelves the diſ-

ciples of the late Damien, and be called after his name, we may perhaps form some idea of what the people of Antioch understood by the word *Christian*. The Apostle assures us, that he and his brethren were "accounted the filth and offscour-"ing of all things," 1 Cor. iv. ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου—πάντων περίψημα. He has chosen two words of the most vile and despicable signification; which, I believe, no *two* words in our language will fully express. The outward state of things is since changed, and the external profession of Christianity is now no reproach; but let us not imagine the nature of things is changed too. It was then received as a maxim, That "all who will live godly "in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii.: and it is a truth still founded upon scripture, and confirmed by experience. If we know nothing of it in our own cases, it is because our tempers and manners have hitherto been too conformable to that wicked world which in our baptisms we were engaged to renounce. I shall have occasion to speak farther upon this point before I close; in the mean time, here is a test to examine ourselves by. If we could not glory in the Christian name, under the same circumstances as the disciples bore it at Antioch, we are yet unworthy of it. Let conscience judge.

Once more: Antioch, the city where the gospel once so flourished, that from thence the whole Christian church received that name by which it is still called, *is now no more*. It has been a heap of ruins more than 500 years. The light of the gospel has been long withdrawn; gaiety and festivity are likewise forgot. Slavery, imposture, and barbarism, have blotted out the resemblance, and even the remembrance of what it once was. O that our *yet* happy land could from hence take a timely warning! Our privileges are great; perhaps greater, all things

things considered, than any nation has possessed since the days of Solomon. Our preservation hitherto has been wonderful; often have we been in extreme danger, but have always found deliverance at hand. Yet let us not be high-minded; our sins and aggravations (it is to be feared) have been, and still are, very great likewise; and God, we see, is no more a respecter of places than of persons. Antioch is ruined, Rev. iii.; Philadelphia, which received so honourable a testimony from the mouth of the Lord himself, has been long since destroyed. Let us beware of boasting; let us not presume too much on what we are; nor say, "The temple of "the Lord, the temple of the Lord is here," Jer. vii. We are the bulwark of the Protestant interest, and none can hurt us. If the Lord is with us, it is true; if we "walk worthy of the vocation where-"with we are called," we are safe; but, if otherwise, we know not how soon God may visit us with his heavy judgements, war, famine, discord, or pestilence; till we become a warning to others, as others are now proposed warnings to us. Our liberties, our properties, our religion, are in God's hands; may he incline our hearts to true repentance, lest at length these blessings should be taken from us, and given to a people that will bring forth more fruit.

There is an ambiguity in the original word *χρηματισαι*, which our translation renders *called*; for, though that is the more general sense it bears in Heathen writers, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, except in this passage, and in Rom. vii. 3. it signifies to be taught or warned by a revelation from heaven. Thus it is spoken of Joseph and the wise men, Matth. ii.; Simeon, Luke, ii.; Cornelius, Acts, x.; Noah, Heb. xi.; and elsewhere. It does not therefore appear quite certain from the text, whether the disciples chose

this name for themſelves, or the wits of the time fixed it upon them as a mark of infamy; or laſtly, whether it was by the ſpecial direction of the Spirit of God that they aſſumed it. But I incline to the latter ſuppoſition; partly, becauſe, in thoſe happy days, it was the practice and the privilege of the diſciples to aſk, and to receive, direction from on high in almoſt every occurrence; but, chiefly, on account of the excellent inſtructions couched under this emphatical name, ſufficient to direct and to animate thoſe who were to be known by it, in their duty to each other, to God, and to the world. Some of theſe I propoſe to infer from the other propoſition contained in the text, That the firſt name by which the followers of the goſpel were generally known, was that of *Chriſtians*.

Hitherto, as they were ſeparated from the world, ſo they had been divided among themſelves; and ſo ſtrong were the prejudices ſubſiſting between the members of the ſame body, that we find, in the beginning of this chapter, ſome of one party contended with the Apoſtle Peter only for eating with thoſe of another. Hence we read the phraſes, *we of the Jews, they of the Gentiles*. But henceforward they are taught to blend and loſe the greater diſtinction of *Jew* and *Gentile*, and the leſſer diviſions of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, in a denomination derived from him who alone was worthy to be their head, and who was equally "rich in mercy to all "that call upon him" in every place.

And, as they thus were taught union and affection among themſelves, ſo their relation to God, the way of their acceſs to him, and their continual dependence upon him, were ſtrongly implied in this name. A Chriſtian is the child of God by faith in Chriſt; he draws near to God in the name of Chriſt; he is led and ſupported by the Spirit of Chriſt; Chriſt is the Alpha and the Omega, the

beginning

beginning and the ending, of the faith, hope, and love of every believer. *From him* alone every good desire proceeds: *by him* alone every good purpose is established: *in him* alone any of our best performances are acceptable. Let us beware (it is a necessary caution in these days) of a Christianity without Christ. I testify to you in plain words, that this is no better than a house without a foundation, a tree without a root, a body without a head, a hope without hope; a delusion, which, if persisted in, will end in irremediable destruction: "For other foundation can no man "lay, than that which is laid, Christ Jesus:" he is the corner-stone, "chosen of God and pre-"cious." Alas! for those who are offended with him in whom God is well pleased! but those who trust in him shall never be ashamed. This is another important lesson comprised in the word *Christian*.

Nor is this all; but in the name of *Christian* they *might*, and we *may*, read the terms upon which we are to stand with the world. If I was asked what the words *Platonist* or *Pythagorean* signified, I should say they expressed certain persons who embraced the sentiments, submitted to the institutions, and imitated the conduct of Pythagoras and Plato; and, in order to describe them farther, I need do no more than give an account of the lives and writings of their respective masters. Could I thus, in some distant, unknown country, where the name of Christianity had been only heard of, have an opportunity of declaring the history, the doctrines, and the laws of Jesus Christ; how he lived, how he taught, how he *died*, and upon what account; what usage he himself received from the world; and what he taught his followers to expect after he should leave them: If I should then describe the lives and the treatment

of his moſt eminent ſervants, who lived immediately after him, and ſhew, "that as he was, ſo were "they in the world," 1 John, iv.; that purſuing his pattern, they found exactly the ſame oppoſition;—would not the inhabitants of ſuch a country conclude, even as the ſcripture has aſſured us, that the temper of Chriſtianity, and the temper of the world, muſt be exactly oppoſite; and that, as it is ſaid, "Whoever will be a friend of the world "is an enemy of God," James, iv.; ſo, whoever had boldneſs to profeſs himſelf a friend of God, muſt neceſſarily be an enemy to the world; and would be ſure to find the world, and all in it, at ſworn enmity with him? But if I ſhould farther tell them, that though the ſame laws, the ſame warnings, and the ſame examples, ſtill ſubſiſt, yet that fierce oppoſition I have ſpoken of is at length nearly over, ſo that none are better pleaſed with the world, or more agreeable to it, than many of thoſe who ſpeak moſt honourably of the Chriſtian name: would not theſe people immediately infer, that one of theſe contending powers muſt have yielded to the triumphant genius of the other? that either the whole world were become ſuch Chriſtians as thoſe who were firſt ſtyled ſo at Antioch, or that modern Chriſtians muſt be, for the moſt part, ſo only by profeſſion, and have neither right nor pretence to their ancient ſpirit? And could we ſuppoſe farther, that after this information, ſome of theſe remote people were to land at Dover, and make the tour of this kingdom, can you think they would be long in determining which of theſe is indeed the caſe?

Numbers are deceived by reſtraining many paſſages in the New Teſtament to the times in which they were delivered, though it ſeems to have been the great care of the apoſtles to prevent, if poſſible, our making this miſtake. St John, having expreſsly

expressly said, "if any man love the world, the "love of the Father is not in him," immediately explains what he means by the world, namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the "pride of life," 1 John, ii. If high distinction, vain shew, and sensual pleasure, make no part of the world at this day, I must allow, that we have no part in the apostles decision, nor any cause to observe his caution; but if these things are as highly prized, as eagerly, and almost as universally pursued now in Britain, as they were sixteen hundred years since at Rome and Antioch, surely we bear the name of Christians in vain; if our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our comforts and our cares, are not very different from those of the generality among whom we live. "If any man," says St Paul, "have not the spirit of Christ, he is "none of his," Rom. viii. Now, whatever more is meant by the phrase of "having the spirit of "Christ," it must certainly mean thus much at least, a disposition and turn of mind, in some degree conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to be evidenced by a life and conversation suitable to his precepts and example. "He was holy, harm-"less, undefiled, separate from sinners; he went "about doing good," Heb. vii. He was gentle and compassionate, meek and patient under the greatest provocations: so active for the glory of God, that his zeal, by a strong and lively figure, is said to have "eaten him up," John, ii.: so affected with the worth of souls, that he wept over his bitterest enemies: so intent on his charitable designs towards men, that an opportunity of helping or instructing them was as meat and drink when he was hungry, John, iv. and made him forget weariness and pain: so full of devotion towards God, that when the day had been wholly consumed in his labours of love, he would frequently

quently redeem whole nights for prayer! Luke, vi. But I must stop.——No pen can describe, no heart conceive, the life of the Son of God in the flesh! yet, in all these things he was our great exemplar; and no profession or appellation can benefit us, unless we are of those who copy closely and carefully after him. For thus saith the beloved apostle, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk even as he walked. He that saith, "I know him, and keepeth not his command"ments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John, ii.

I shall conclude with a short address to three sorts of persons. And, first, If there are any such here, (would to God this part of my labour may prove needless), I would recommend this subject to the consideration of those who have *almost*, if not *altogether*, cast off the honourable name into which they were baptised; who, trusting to what they call the light of nature, and the powers of human reason, venture to determine the fitness of things by their own standard, and declare in their words, as well as by their actions, "they will not "have this man to rule over them," Luke, xix. Is not this an unaccountable event upon your plan, that the name which first went out from Antioch, under the greatest disadvantages, should so soon overspread the world, without arts or arms, without any force, or any motive of an external kind? Is it possible, that any kind or degree of enthusiasm could influence, not a *few*, at one time, or in one place, but *multitudes*, of all ages, sexes, tempers, and circumstances, to embrace a profession which, in proportion to the strictness wherewith it was followed, was always attended with reproach and suffering? Those places which were most noted for opposition to this way, have been long since buried

buried in the duſt: but a ſucceſſion of thoſe whom the world counted "not worthy to live, and of "whom the world was not worthy," Acts, xxv. Heb. xi. has always ſubſiſted, and ſtill ſubſiſts. Had you lived in thoſe days when Jeſus Chriſt aſſured a company of poor diſregarded fiſhermen, that neither the power nor the policy of the world, nor the "gates of hell, ſhould ever prevail againſt them," Matth. xvi. you might have been leſs inexcuſeable in refuſing to believe him. But now, when you have the accompliſhment of this promiſe before your eyes, and well know (for you are book-read) what various attempts have been made, with what ſteadineſs and formidable appearances they have been for a while carried on, to render theſe words vain, but how at length ſuch attempts have totally failed, and ended in the confuſion and ruin of thoſe who engaged in them,—what tolerable reaſon can you aſſign for the part you act? Does the tendency of the goſpel diſpleaſe you? Is it an enemy to that virtue you are ſo fond—to talk of? On the contrary, we are ready to put it to the proof, that here are not only the ſublimeſt maxims of true virtue, but that the practice, or even the real love of virtue, are quite unattainable upon any other ſcheme; and that the moſt ſpecious pretences, independent of this, are no more than great "ſwelling words of vanity," 2 Pet. ii. I ſpeak the more freely upon this point, becauſe I ſpeak from experience. I was once as you are. I verily thought that I "ought to do," (or at leaſt that I might do) "many things againſt Jeſus of "Nazareth," Acts, xxvi. None ever went farther than me, according to the limits of my years and capacity, in oppoſing the truths of the goſpel. But the mercy of God ſpared me; and his providence having led me through various changes and circumſtances of life, in each of which I have had a

ſtill

ſtill deeper conviction of my former errors, has at length given me this opportunity to tell you, (O that I could ſpeak it to your hearts), "that at the "name of Jeſus every knee," ſooner or later, "muſt bow," Phil. ii. before him every heart muſt either bend or break; that he is full of mercy, love, and pardon, to all that ſubmit themſelves to him; but that, ere long, he ſhall be "revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to execute "judgement, and to convince ungodly ſinners of "all the hard ſpeeches they have ſpoken againſt "him," Jude.

I would, 2dly, Addreſs thoſe who, while they *profeſs to believe* in the Lord Jeſus, do *in their works* manifeſtly *deny him*, Tit. i. This is, if poſſible, a worſe caſe than the other; yet how frequent! You believe that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world, both to be a propitiation for ſin, and alſo to give us an example of a godly life; and yet continue contentedly in the practice of thoſe ſins for which he poured forth his ſoul, in the purſuit of thoſe vices which the goſpel diſallows, and in the indulgence of thoſe deſires which your own conſciences condemn. Think, I entreat you, of theſe words in the 50th Pſalm; unto the wicked God ſaith, "What haſt thou to do, that thou "ſhouldſt take my covenant into thy mouth: "ſeeing thou hateſt inſtruction, and caſteſt my "words behind thee?" This queſtion is now propoſed to our conſciences, that we may be aware in time of the danger of inſincerity; and not "periſh with a lie in our right hands," Iſ. xliv. If we cannot anſwer it now, what ſhall we ſay in that awful hour, when God ſhall ſpeak it in ten thouſand thunders, to all who, in this life, preſumed to mock him with an empty outſide worſhip? "drawing near him with their lips, when "their hearts were far from him," Iſ. xxix. For the

the day is at hand, "the day of the Lord," when God shall bring every "hidden thing to light," when every man's work shall be tried and weighed; *tried* in the fire of his purity, *weighed* in the balance of his righteousness; and as the issue proves, so must the consequence abide to all eternity: a trial and a scrutiny which no flesh could abide, were it not for the interposing merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Judge. But he has already told us, that he will then own none but those who were faithfully devoted to his service here. To the urgent cries, and strongest pleas of others, he will give no other answer, but "I "knew you not, I never knew you," Matth. vii. "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting "fire," Matth. xxv.——What will it then avail to plead our privileges, when, if this be all, we may read our doom already? "And that servant who "knew his master's will, and prepared not him-"self, neither did according to his will, shall be "beaten with many stripes: for unto whomsoever "much is given, of him much shall be required; "and to whom men have committed much, of "him they will ask the more. O consider this, "ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, "and there be none to deliver," Luke, xii.

Finally, let those who through grace have attained to worship God "in spirit and in truth," be careful to adorn and hold fast their profession. "You see your calling, brethren:" let the name of Christian always remind you of your high obligation to, and continual dependence upon, the Author of your faith. Use it as a means to animate and regulate your whole behaviour. And if, upon some occasions, you find undeserved ill offices, or unkind constructions, wonder not at it: thus it must and will be, more or less, to all who would "exercise themselves in keeping a conscience void

"of

" of offence," Acts, xxiv. Yet be careful to model your actions by the rule of God's word. Our Lord says, " Blessed are ye when men revile you, " and say all manner of evil against you falsely, " for my sake," Matth. v. Observe, first, the evil spoken of you must be false and groundless; and, 2dly, the cause must be " for the sake of " Christ," and not for any singularities of your own, either in sentiment or practice, which you cannot clearly maintain from scripture. It is a great blessing when the innocence and simplicity of the dove is happily blended with true wisdom. It is a mercy to be kept from giving unnecessary offence, in these times of division and discord. Endeavour that a principle of love to God, and to mankind for his sake, may have place in all your actions; this will be a secret, seasonable, and infallible guide, in a thousand incidents, where particular rules cannot reach. " Be sober, be vigi- " lant, continue instant in prayer;" and in a little while all your conflicts shall determine in conquest, faith shall give place to sight, and hope to possession. Yet a little while, and " Christ, who " is our life, shall appear," Col. iii. to vindicate his truth, to put a final end to all evil and offence: and then *we also*, even all who have loved him, and waited for him, " shall appear with him in " glory," Is. xxv.

SER-

SERMON IV.

ON ALL THINGS BEING GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.

Rom. viii. 32.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

VARIOUS have been the disputes, and various the mistakes of men, concerning the things of God. Too often, amidst the heat of fierce contending parties, truth is injured by both sides, befriended by neither. Religion, the pretended cause of our many controversies, is sometimes wholly unconcerned in them: I mean, that "pure religion "and undefiled, that wisdom which cometh from "above," abounds with proof of its divine original, "being pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to "be entreated, full of mercy and good works, "without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James, iii. Religion is a serious and a personal concern. It arises from a right knowledge of God and ourselves; a sense of the great things he has done for fallen man; a persuasion, or at least a well-grounded hope, of our own interest in his favour; and a principle of unbounded love to *him who thus first loved us*. It consists in an entire surrender of ourselves, and our all to God; in setting him continually before us, as the object of our desires, the scope and inspector of our actions, and our only refuge and hope in every trouble: finally, in making the goodness of God to us the motive and model of our behaviour to our fellow-creatures, to love, pity, relieve, instruct, forbear, and

and forgive them, as occaſions offer; becauſe we ourſelves both need and experience theſe things at the hand of our heavenly Father. The two great points to which it tends, and which it urges the ſoul, where it has taken place, inceſſantly to preſs after, are, *communion* with God, and *conformity* to him: and as neither of theſe can be fully attained in this life, it teaches us to pant after a better; to withdraw our thoughts and affections from temporal things, and fix them on that eternal eſtate, where we truſt our deſires ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied; and the work begun by *grace* ſhall be crowned with *glory*.

Such is the religion of the goſpel. This the life and doctrine of our Lord, and the writings of his apoſtles, jointly recommend. An excellent abridgement of the whole we have in this 8th chapter to the Romans, deſcribing the ſtate, temper, practice, privileges, and immoveable ſecurity, of a true Chriſtian. Every verſe is rich in comfort and inſtruction, and might, without violence, afford a theme for volumes; particularly that which I have read, may be ſtyled *evangelium evangelii*; a complete and comprehenſive epitome of whatever is truly worthy our knowledge and our hope. The limits of our time are too narrow to admit any previous remarks on the context, or indeed to conſider the ſubject according to the order of an exact diviſion; therefore I ſhall not at preſent uſe any artificial method; but, taking the words as they lie, I ſhall offer a few practical obſervations, which ſeem naturally and immediately to ariſe from the peruſal of them, making ſuch improvement as may occur as I go along. And may the Father of mercies, who has put this treaſure into our hands, favour us with his gracious preſence and bleſſing!

1. From the words, "He ſpared not his own "Son," we may obſerve in one view, the wonderful

ful goodneſs and the inflexible ſeverity of God. So great was his goodneſs, that when man was by ſin rendered incapable of *any* happineſs, and obnoxious to *all* miſery; incapable of reſtoring himſelf, or of receiving the leaſt aſſiſtance from any power in heaven or in earth; God ſpared not his only-begotten Son, but in his unexampled love to the world, gave him, who alone was able to repair the breach. Every gift of God is good: the bounties of his common providence are very valuable: that he ſhould continue life, and ſupply that life with food, raiment, and a variety of comforts, to thoſe who by rebellion had forfeited all, was wonderful: but what are all inferior bleſſings, compared to this unſpeakable gift of the Son of his love? Abraham had given many proofs of his love and obedience before he was commanded to offer up Iſaac upon the altar; but God ſeems to paſs by all that went before, as of ſmall account in compariſon of this laſt inſtance of duty: "Now I know "that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not "with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me," Gen. xxii. Surely we likewiſe muſt ſay, "In this "was manifeſted the love of God to us, becauſe "he gave his Son, his only Son, to be the life of "the world." But all compariſon fails: Abraham was bound in duty, bound by gratitude; neither was it a free-will offering, but by the expreſs command of God: but to us the mercy was undeſired, as well as undeſerved. "Herein is love, not "that we loved God;" on the contrary, we were enemies to him, and in rebellion againſt him; "but "that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the "propitiation of our ſins," the ſins we had committed againſt himſelf. My friends, ought not this love to meet a return? Is it not moſt deſireable to be able to ſay with the apoſtle, upon good grounds, "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us?"

Should

Should it not be our continual inquiry, "What "shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" especially for this, which is both the crown and the spring of all the rest? Are we cold and unaffected at this astonishing proof of divine love? and are our hearts not grieved and humbled at our own ingratitude? then are we ungrateful and insensible indeed!

The justice and severity of God is no less conspicuous than his goodness in these words: as he spared not to give his Son for our sakes, so, when Christ appeared in our nature, undertook our cause, and was charged with our sins, though he was the Father's well-beloved Son, "he was not "spared." He drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs: he bore all the shame, sorrow, and pain, all the distress of body and mind, that must otherwise have fallen upon our heads. His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was one series of humiliation and suffering, John, xviii. Observe him in the world, despised, vilified, persecuted even to death, by unreasonable and wicked men; ridiculed, buffeted, spit upon; and at length nailed to the accursed tree! Consider him in the wilderness, Luke iv. given up to the power, and assaulted by the temptations of the devil! Behold him in the garden, Luke, xxii. and say, "Was ever sorrow like unto this sorrow, "wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of "his fierce anger?" How unconceivable must that agony be, which caused his blood to forsake its wonted channels, and start from every pore of his body! Behold him, lastly, upon the cross, Matthew, xxvii. suffering the most painful and ignominious death; suspended between two thieves; surrounded by cruel enemies, who made sport of his pangs; derided by all that passed by! Attend to his dolorous cry, expressive of an inward distress beyond

beyond all we have yet spoken of, "My God, my "God, why hast thou forsaken me?" St Paul reminds the Galatians, that, by his preaching among them, Jesus Christ had "been evidently set forth "crucified before their eyes," Gal. iii. Would it please God to bless my poor words to the like purpose, you would see a meaning you never yet observed in that awful passage, "Tribulation, and "wrath, and anguish, upon every soul of man that "doth evil," Rom. ii.: for the punishment due to the sins of all that shall stand at the last day on the right hand of God met and centered in Christ, the Lamb of expiation; nor was the dreadful weight removed, till he, triumphant in death, pronounced, "It is finished," John, xix. Let us not think of this as a matter of speculation only; our lives, our precious souls, are concerned in it. Let us infer from hence, how "fearful a thing it "is to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. The Apostle Peter, 2 Peter, ii. admonishes those to whom he wrote, from the fearful example of the angels who sinned, and of the old world; where the same word is used as in my text, ουκ εφεισατο, "He spared them not;" that is, he punished them to the utmost; he did not afford them the least mitigation. It is a frequent figure of speech, by which much more is understood than is or can be expressed. Much more, then, may we say, if God "spared not his own Son, what shall "be the end of those who obey not the gospel?" 1 Pet. iv. If the holy Jesus was thus dealt with, when he was only accounted a sinner by imputation, where shall the impenitent and the ungodly appear? "If these things were done in the green tree, what "shall be done in the dry?" Luke, xxiii. The punishment of sin in the soul in a future state is twofold: the *wrath of God* in all its dreadful effects, typified by fire unquenchable, Mark, ix.; and *the*

stings

stings of conscience, represented by a worm that never dies. Our Lord endured the former; but the other perhaps could have no place in him, who was absolutely perfect and sinless. But if the *prospect* of *one* made him amazed and sorrowful beyond measure, what consternation must the *concurrence* of *both* raise in the wicked, when they shall hear and feel their irrevocable doom? May we have grace so to reflect on these things, that we may flee for safety to the hope set before us, to Jesus Christ, the only, and the sure *refuge from* that approaching *storm*, which "shall sweep "away all the workers of iniquity as a flood," Isa. xxiii.

II. HERE, as in a glass, we may see the evil of sin. The bitter fruits of sin are indeed visible every where. Sin is the cause of all the labour, sickness, pain, and grief, under which the whole creation groans. Sin often makes man a terror and a burden, both to himself and those about him. Sin occasions discord and confusion, in families, cities, and kingdoms. Sin has always *directed* the *march*, and *ensured* the *success*, of those instruments of divine vengeance whom we style *Mighty Conquerors*. Those ravagers of mankind, who spread devastation and horror far and wide, and ruin more in a few days than ages can repair, have only afforded so many melancholy proofs of the malignity of sin. For this, a shower of flaming brimstone fell upon a whole country; for this, an overwhelming deluge destroyed a whole world; for this, principalities and powers were cast from heaven, and are reserved under *chains* of *darkness*, 2 Pet. ii. to a more dreadful doom. But none of these things, nor all of them together, afford such a conviction of the heinous nature, and destructive effects of sin, as we may gather from these words, "He spared not his "own Son."

III.

III. HERE we may likewiſe ſee the value of the human ſoul. We ordinarily judge of the worth of a thing by the price which a wiſe man who is acquainted with its intrinſic excellency is willing to give for it. Now the ſoul of a man was of ſuch eſtimation in the ſight of God who made it, that, when it was ſinking into endleſs ruin, "he ſpared "not his own Son, but freely delivered him for "our ranſom." Two things eſpecially render the ſoul thus important in the view of Infinite Wiſdom: 1ſt, The capacity he had given it; for "he form-"ed it for himſelf," Iſa. xliii. capable of knowing, ſerving, and enjoying God; and by conſequence, incapable of happineſs in any thing beneath him; for nothing can ſatisfy any being but the attainment of its proper end: and, 2dly, The duration he had aſſigned it, beyond the limits of time, and the exiſtence of the material world. The moſt excellent and exalted being, if only the creature of a day, would be worthy of little regard*. On the other hand, immortality itſelf would be of ſmall value to a creature that could riſe no higher than the purſuits of animal life: But in the ſoul of man, the capability of complete happineſs or exquiſite miſery, and that for ever, make it a prize worthy the contention of different worlds. For this an open intercourſe was maintained between heaven and earth, till at length the Word of God appeared "in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh," that, in our nature, he might encounter and ſubdue the ſworn enemy of our ſpecies. All that has been tranſacted in the kingdoms of providence and grace, from the beginning of the world, has been in ſubſerviency to this grand point, the redemption of the deathleſs ſoul. And is it ſo?—And ſhall there be found amongſt us numbers utterly inſenſible of their natural dignity, that dare diſparage

* Vid. Young's Night Thoughts, 7th Night.

the plan of Infinite Wifdom, and ftake thofe fouls for trifles, which nothing lefs than the blood of Chrift could redeem! There is need to ufe great plainnefs of fpeech; the matter is of the utmoft weight; be not therefore offended that I would warn you "againft the deceitfulnefs of fin." Suffer not your hearts to be entangled in the vanities of the world; either they will fail, and difappoint you in life, or at leaft you muft leave them behind you when you die. You muft enter an invifible unknown ftate, where you cannot expect to meet any of thofe amufements or engagements which you now find fo neceffary to pafs away the tedious load of time that hangs upon your hands. You to whom a few hours of leifure are fo burdenfome, have you confidered how you fhall be able to fupport an eternity? You ftand upon a brink, and all about you is uncertainty.—You fee, of your acquaintance, fome or other daily called away, fome who were as likely to live as yourfelves. You know not but you may be the very next. You cannot be certain, "but this very night your foul "may be required of you," Luke, xii. Perhaps a few hours may introduce you into the prefence of that God whom you have been fo little defirous to pleafe. And can you, in fuch a fituation, fport and play with as little concern as the lamb, already marked out to bleed to-morrow? Oh! it is ftrange! How fatally has the god of this world blinded your eyes! and how dreadful muft your fituation be in death, if death alone can undeceive you!

IV. Lastly, We may gather from thefe words the certainty of the gofpel-falvation. God himfelf delivered up his Son for us all. He declared himfelf well pleafed with him, Matth. iii. as our Surety, upon his firft entrance on his work; and teftified his acceptance of his undertaking, in that he raifed him from the dead, and received him into heaven

heaven as our Advocate. Now, "if God himself "be thus for us, who can be againſt us?" Rom. viii. If he who only has a right to judge us, is pleaſed to juſtify us, "who can lay any thing to our charge? "If Chriſt, who died" for our ſins, and is riſen on our behalf, has engaged to "intercede for us, who "ſhall condemn?" "There is now no condem- "nation to them that are in Jeſus Chriſt." Nor is this all; but every thing we ſtand in need of is fully provided; and we may well argue, as the apoſtle has taught us elſewhere, "If when we were ene- "mies we were reconciled to God by the death of "his Son, much more, being reconciled, we ſhall "be ſaved by his life," Rom. v.: or, as in the paſſage before us, "He that ſpared not his own "Son, but delivered him up for us all," when we were alienated from him, "how ſhall he not with "him freely give us all things," now he has taught us to pray, and given us his own promiſes to plead for all we aſk?—This brings me to the ſecond clauſe of the text; only it may be proper, before I enter upon it, to ſubjoin two cautions, to prevent miſtakes from what has been already ſaid.

1ſt, Let us remember that all is *free gift*. He *gave* his Son; he *gives* all things with him. The goſpel allows no place for merit of our own in any reſpect. There was no moving cauſe in us, unleſs our miſery may be deemed ſuch. Our deliverance, in its riſe, progreſs, and accompliſhment, muſt be aſcribed to grace alone; and he that would glory, muſt "glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i.

2d, Let us obſerve the Apoſtle's phraſe. He ſays not abſolutely for all, but for *us* all; that is, thoſe who are deſcribed in the former part of the chapter, "who are led by the Spirit of God, who "walk not after the fleſh, who are delivered from

" the bondage of corruption," who have liberty to call God, " Abba, Father," and prove their relation by following him as " dear children." Chriſt is " the author of eternal ſalvation to thoſe only " who obey him," Heb. v. It cannot be otherwiſe, ſince a branch of that ſalvation is to deliver us " from " our ſins," and " the preſent evil world," Gal. i.; to " purify us from dead works, to ſerve the living " God." " Be not deceived, God will not be mock- " ed; whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he reap. " He that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall," notwithſtanding all that Chriſt has done or ſuffered, yea ſo much the rather, " of the fleſh reap corruption," Gal. vi.

The text having declared, that God ſpared not his Son for our ſakes, proceeds to infer, that " with him he will aſſuredly give us all things." Here we may take notice, firſt, that the words *all things* muſt be limited to ſuch as are needful and good for us. It may be ſaid of many of our deſires, " Ye know not what ye aſk," Matth. xx.: in ſuch caſes, the beſt anſwer we can receive is a denial. For thoſe bleſſings which God has promiſed abſolutely to give, ſuch as pardon, grace, and eternal life, we cannot be too earneſt or explicit in our prayers; but in temporal things we ſhould be careful to aſk nothing but with ſubmiſſion to the divine will. The promiſes, it is true, appertain to " the life that now is, as well as that which is " to come," 1 Tim. iv. " Whether Paul, or A- " pollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things " preſent, or things to come; all are ours, if we " are Chriſt's," 1 Cor. iii. But the particular *modus* of theſe things God has reſerved in his own hands, to beſtow them as beſt ſhall ſuit our various tempers, abilities, and occaſions. And well for us that it is ſo: for we ſhould ſoon ruin ourſelves if left to our own choice: like children who are fond

to

to meddle with what would hurt them, but refuſe the moſt ſalutary medicines, if unpalatable; ſo we often purſue, with earneſtneſs and anxiety, thoſe things which, if we could obtain them, would greatly harm, if not deſtroy us. Often, too, with a raſh and blind impatience, we ſtruggle to avoid or eſcape thoſe difficulties which God ſees fit to appoint for the moſt gracious and merciful purpoſes,—to correct our pride and vanity, to exerciſe and ſtrengthen our faith, to wean us from the world, to teach us a cloſer dependance upon himſelf, and to awaken our deſires after a better inheritance.

Again, as God, by his promiſe freely to give us all things, has not engaged to comply with the meaſure of our unreaſonable ſhort-ſighted wiſhes: ſo neither has he confined himſelf as to the time or manner of beſtowing his gifts. The bleſſing we ſeek, though perhaps not wholly improper, may be at preſent unſeaſonable: in this caſe the Lord will ſuſpend it, till he ſees it will afford us the comfort and ſatisfaction he intends us by it; and then we ſhall be ſure to have it. Sometimes it is with-held, to ſtir us up to fervency and importunity in our prayers, ſometimes to make it doubly welcome and valuable when it comes. So likewiſe as to the manner.—We aſk one good thing, and he gives an equivalent in ſomething elſe; and when we come to weigh all things, we ſee cauſe to ſay his choice was beſt. Thus David acknowledges: "In the day "that I called, thou didſt anſwer me, and ſtrength-"eneddſt me with ſtrength in my ſoul," Pſ. cxxxviii. David aſked for deliverance from trouble; the Lord gave him ſtrength to bear it; and he allows his prayer was fully anſwered. A parallel caſe the apoſtle records: He beſought the Lord thrice, 2 Cor. xii. for the removal of that trial which he calls "a "thorn in the fleſh;" the anſwer he received was,

" My grace is sufficient for thee." Such an assurance was more valuable than the deliverance he fought could be. Sometimes we seek a thing in a way of our own, by means and instruments of our own devising. God crosses our feeble purposes, that he may give us the pleasure of receiving it immediately from himself. It were easy to enlarge on this head: let it suffice to know, our concerns are in his hands who " does all things well;" and who will and does appoint " all to work together for " our good."

From the latter clause, thus limited and explained, many useful directions might be drawn. I shall only mention two or three, and conclude.

1st, Since we are told, that God freely gives us all things, let us learn to see and acknowledge his hand in all we have, and in all we meet with. When Jacob was returning to Canaan after a long absence, Gen. xxxii. the fear of his brother Esau occasioned him to divide his family and substance into separate companies; and, comparing his present situation with the poor condition in which he had been driven from home twenty years before, he breaks out into this act of praise: " I am not " worthy, O Lord, of all thy mercies; for with " my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am " become two bands!" How pious and how cheering was this reflection! And afterwards, Gen. xxxiii. when his brother Esau asked him concerning his sons, " They are the children (said " he) which God has graciously given thy ser- " vant." Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the Most High God ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would, like the light, diffuse a lustre and a beauty upon every thing around us. To consider every comfort of life as an effect and proof of the divine favour towards us, would, like the feigned alchymist's stone, turn all our possessions to

gold,

gold, and ſtamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge indifferent. Nor is this more than the truth: "The hairs of our head "are all numbered," Matth. x. The eye of divine providence is upon every "ſparrow of the "field;" nor can we properly term any circumſtance of our lives *ſmall*, ſince ſuch as ſeem moſt trifling in themſelves do often give birth to thoſe which we judge moſt important. On the other hand, to be able to diſcover the wiſdom and goodneſs of our heavenly Father through the darkeſt cloud of troubles and afflictions, to ſee all our trials appointed to us, in number, weight, and meaſure; nothing befalling us by chance, nothing without need, nothing without a ſupport, nothing without a deſigned advantage: What a ſtay muſt theſe apprehenſions be to the ſoul! Take away theſe, and man is the moſt forlorn, helpleſs, miſerable object in the world; *pining* for every thing he has not, *trembling* for every thing he has: equally ſuffering under the preſſure of what *does* happen, and the fear of what *may*; liable to thouſands of unſuſpected dangers, yet unable to guard againſt thoſe which are moſt obvious. Were there no future life, it would be our intereſt to be truly and uniformly religious, in order to make the moſt of this. How unhappy muſt they be, to whom the thoughts of a God ever-preſent is a burden they ſtrive, in vain, to ſhake off! But let us learn "to acknowledge him in all our ways," and then "he will direct and bleſs our paths," Prov. iii.

2d, Since all we have is the gift of God, let this teach us, "in whatever ſtate we are, therewith to "be content." "Our heavenly Father knoweth "what we have need of before we aſk him," Matth. vi. "The earth is his, and the fulneſs "thereof," Pſal. xxiv.; and his goodneſs is equal-

to his power; a proof of which we have in the text. He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds. Are you poor? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to him to give you large estates, as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils: but he sees poverty best for you; he sees prosperity might prove your ruin; therefore he has appointed you the honour of being in this respect conformable to your Lord, who, when on earth, "had not where to lay his head," Matth. viii. Have any of you lost a dear friend or relation, in whose life you thought your own lives bound up? "Be still, and know that he is God," Psal. xlvi. It was he gave you that friend; his blessing made your friend a comfort to you; and though the stream is now cut off, the fountain is still full. Be not like a wild bull in a net; the Lord has many ways to turn your mourning into joy. Are any of you sick? Think how the compassionate Jesus healed diseases with a word, in the days of his flesh. Has he not the same power now as then? Has he not the same love? Has he, in his exalted state, *forgot* his poor languishing members here below? No verily;—he still retains his sympathy; "he is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities; he "knows our frame; he remembers we are but "dust," Psal. ciii. It is because sickness is better for you than health, that he thus visits you. He dealt in the same manner with Lazarus, whom he loved, John, xi. Resign yourselves, therefore, to his wisdom, and repose in his love. There is a land where the blessed inhabitant shall no more say, "I "am sick," Isa. xxxiii.; and there "all that love "the Lord Jesus" shall shortly be. Are any of you tempted? "Blessed is the man that endureth "temptation; for when he is tried, he shall re-"ceive the crown of life, which the Lord has pro-"mised

" mised to them that love him," James, i. Sure you need no other argument to be content, shall I say, or to rejoice, and be exceeding glad? " My " son, despise not thou the chastening of the " Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. Be it in poverty or losses, in body or mind, in your own person or another's, it is all appointed by God, and shall issue in your great benefit, if you are of the number of those that love him.

3d, Once more: Since it is said that all things are freely given us in and together with Christ, let us " give all diligence to make OUR calling and " election sure," 2 Pet. i.; to know that we have an interest in him and his mediation; and then (if I may borrow a common expression) we are made for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ, sent from God on a merciful errand to a lost world, did not come empty: no; he is fraught with all blessings, suitable to all persons, extending to all times, enduring to all eternity. O make it your great care to know him and to please him; study his word, call upon his name, frequent his ordinances, observe his sayings, seek to know him as the only *way* to God, John, xiv.; the way to pardon, peace, and divine communion here, and to complete happiness hereafter. When once you can say, " My " Beloved is mine," Sol. Song, ii. I account all his interest my own, " and I am his;" I have given myself up to him without reserve;—you will, you *must* be happy. You will be interested in all his attributes and communicable perfections. His wisdom will be your high tower, his providence your constant shield, his love your continual solace. " He will give his angels charge over you, to keep " you in all your ways," Psal. lxxxi. In times of difficulty he will direct your counsels; in times of danger he will fill you with comfort, and " keep"

you " in perfect peace," Isa. xxvi. when others quake for fear. He will bless your basket and your store, your substance and your families: your days shall happily pass in doing your Father's will, and receiving renewed tokens of his favour; and at night you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. When afflictions befal you, (for these likewise are the fruits of love), you shall see your God near at hand, " a very present help in trouble," Psal. xlvi.; you shall find your strength increased in proportion to your trial; you shall in due time be restored, as gold from the furnace, purified sevenfold, to praise your great Deliverer. Every thing you meet in life shall yield you profit; and death, which puts a fatal period to the hope of the wicked; *death*, at whose name thousands turn pale, shall to you be an entrance into a new and endless life. He who tasted death *for* you, Heb ii. and sanctified it *to* you, shall lead and support you through that dark valley: you shall shut your eyes upon the things of time, to open them the next moment in the blissful presence of your reconciled God. You that a minute before was surrounded by weeping helpless friends, shall, in an instant, be transported and inspired to join that glorious song, " To him who " loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own " blood, and hath made us priests and kings to God " and his Father; to him be glory and strength, for " ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was " slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, " and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev v. Thus " blessed shall the man be that fears " the Lord," Psal cxxviii. Thus shall it be done " (Ephth. vi.) to him. whom the King delighteth to " honour." Amen.

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SERMON V.

ON SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN, v. 39.

Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

THE phrase in the Greek is ambiguous, and may be either rendered, according to our reading, as a command, *search the scriptures*; or else as simply affirming, *ye do search the scriptures*. And as the words were spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were exceedingly studious in the letter of the scriptures, this may perhaps have been their first design. The difference is not material: and either sense will afford us instruction. If we receive it as a command, we should consider it as given us by the Lord himself, whose disciples we profess to be; as bound on us by our own acknowledgement, since in them we think and say we have eternal life; and as absolutely necessary to be complied with, since it is these, and these only, testify of Christ, in the knowledge of whom our eternal life consists. If we should understand it in the latter sense, as spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, it may give us a useful caution not to lay too much stress, either on what we think, or on what we do. For these persons, we find, had in some respects a right sentiment of the holy scriptures: they believed that in them there was eternal life: and, in a sense likewise, they made this an inducement to read, yea, to search them. But though they thus

thought and thus acted; and though the scriptures, from the first page to the last, do testify of Christ; yet they could not understand or receive this testimony, but rejected the Messiah whom they professed to hope for, and took all their pains in searching the scriptures to no purpose.

In what I am about to lay before you, I propose the following order: 1st, To mention a few requisites, without which it is impossible rightly to understand the scriptures: 2d, To shew *how* the scriptures testify of Christ: 3d, To consider what the import of their testimony is: 4th, To press the practice of searching the scriptures, from the argument used in the text, which is equally applicable to us as to the Jews of old, "that in them we think we have eter-"nal life."

I. The first requisite I shall mention is *Sincerity*; I mean a real desire to be instructed by the scripture, and to submit both our sentiments and our practices to be controuled and directed by what we read there. Without this, our reading and searching will only issue in our greater condemnation, and bring us under the heavy doom of the servant that knew his master's will, and did it not. A remarkable instance of this we have in the 42d and two following chapters of Jeremiah. After the destruction of Jerusalem, and the death of Gedaliah, the people that were left intreated the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them, concerning their intended removal into Egypt. Their request was fair: "That the Lord "thy God may shew us the way wherein we may "walk, and the thing that we may do." Their engagement was very solemn: "The Lord be a true "and faithful witness between us, if we do not even "according to all things for the which the Lord thy "God shall send to us. Whether it be good, or whether

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" it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our " God, to whom we ſend thee." But their hypocriſy was moſt deteſtable. The Lord, who ſeeth the inmoſt purpoſes of the ſoul, could not be put off with their fair pretences. He ſent them in anſwer an expreſs prohibition to go into Egypt: aſſuring them that his curſe ſhould follow them, and that there they ſhould certainly periſh. Yet they went, and verified what the prophet had told them: " For ye diſſembled in your hearts, when ye ſent " me to the Lord your God, ſaying, Pray for us " unto the Lord our God, and according to all that " the Lord our God ſhall ſay, ſo declare unto us, " and we will do it." Then they ſpoke out; and, like themſelves, when they told him, " As for the " word which thou haſt ſpoken unto us, in the name " of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but " we will certainly do whatever thing goeth forth " out of our own mouth." None of us dare ſpeak thus in expreſs terms: but if we bring our pre-conceived opinions or purpoſes, not in order to examine them ſtrictly by the teſt of ſcripture, but to find or wreſt ſome paſſages in the word of God to countenance or juſtify ourſelves; if our deſire is not ſimply to be led in the very way of God's commandments; if we are not really willing to diſcover every error and evil that may be in us, in order to forſake then; we cloſely imitate theſe deceitful, obſtinate, inſolent Jews, be our pretences ever ſo fair, and are liable to the like dreadful judgement for our hypocriſy; the curſe of God upon our devices here, and the portion of his enemies hereafter.

Where this ſincerity is wanting, every thing is wrong; neither praying, nor hearing, nor reading, can profit. The ſcripture abounds with the ſevereſt threatenings againſt thoſe who preſume to mock the all-ſeeing God. I ſhall only produce one paſſage

paſſage from Ezekiel, xiv 5. "Son of man, theſe "men have ſet up their idols in their hearts, and "put the ſtumbling-block of iniquity before their "faces: ſhould I be inquired of at all by them?— "Every man of the houſe of Iſrael that ſetteth up "his idols in his heart, and putteth the ſtumbling-"block of iniquity before his face, and cometh to "the prophet, I the Lord will anſwer him that "cometh, according to the multitude of his idols." I ſay not this, that I would have any one throw aſide the ordinances of God, eſpecially his public worſhip. Theſe are the means which God has appointed, in which he has commanded us to wait, and where he is often pleaſed to be found, even by thoſe who ſeek him not. But I would intreat ſuch perſons ſeriouſly to conſider the dreadful condition they would be in, if death ſhould ſurpriſe them in ſuch a ſtate of inſincerity as renders their very prayers and ſacrifices "an abomination to the Lord," and perverts thoſe things which are deſigned for their advantage, into an occaſion of their falling.

A ſecond thing neceſſary is *Diligence*. This, with the former, is finely deſcribed in the book of Proverbs. "My ſon, if thou wilt receive my "words, and hide my commandment within thee; "ſo that thou incline thine ear to wiſdom, and "apply thine heart to underſtanding: yea, if thou "criedſt after knowledge, and lifteſt up thy voice "for underſtanding; if thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, "and ſearcheſt for her as hid treaſures: then ſhalt "thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find "the knowledge of God," Prov ii. The wiſdom of God, in which we are concerned, is contained in his word. The beſt underſtanding is to keep his commandments, Pſal cxi.; but as we cannot keep them unleſs we know them, neither can we know them without a diligent inquiry. The word which

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is rendered search, ερευναω, is borrowed from the practice of *miners:* it implies two things, to dig, and to examine. First, with much labour they pierce the earth to a considerable depth; and when they have thus found a vein of precious ore, they break and sift it, and suffer no part to escape their notice. Thus must we join frequent assiduous reading, with close and awakened meditation; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, carefully taking notice of the circumstances, occasion, and application of what we read; being assured, that there is a treasure of truth and happiness under our hands, if we have but skill to discover and improve it. Only let us be mindful that we have the same views in reading the scripture, that God has in revealing it to us, which the apostle thus enumerates: "All scripture," or the whole scripture, πασα γραφη, "is given by inspiration of God, and is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correc-"tion, for instruction in righteousness; that the "man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish-"ed to every good work," 2 Tim. iii. And elsewhere it is said to be able to make us "wise unto "salvation." How absurd would it be for a man to read a treatise of husbandry with a design of learning navigation, or to seek the principles of trade and commerce in an essay on music? No less absurd is it to read or study the scriptures with any other view than to receive its doctrines, submit to its reproofs, and obey its precepts, that we may be made "wise unto salvation" All disquisitions and criticisms that stop short of this, that do not amend the heart as well as furnish the head are empty and dangerous, at least to ourselves, whatever use they may be of to others. An experience of this caused a learned critic and eminent commentator, (Grotius), to confess, towards the close of

of his life, *Vitam prorsus perdidi, laboriose nihil agendo!* Alas! I have wasted my life in much labour to no purpose! But, on the contrary, when we are diligent and studious, that we may be better acquainted with the divine precepts and promises, and better inclined to observe and trust them, then we may hope for happy success; "for, blessed is "the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, "and who meditates therein day and night: for "he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of waters, "which bringeth forth its fruit in due season; his "leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he "doth" under this influence "shall prosper," Psal. i. Thus God has promised, and thus many have found it, and been enabled to adopt the words of David, "Thou through thy commandments "hast made me wiser than my enemies, for they "are ever with me: I have more understanding "than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my "meditation," Psal. cxix.

Humility is a third thing very necessary to a profitable perusal of the scriptures. "God giveth his "grace to the humble," James, iv.: "He will "guide the meek in judgement, he will enlighten "the simple in his way," Psal. xxv. The proud he resisteth, ἀντιτασσεται, he draws up against him, he prepares himself as it were with his whole force to oppose his progress. A most formidable expression! If God only leaves us to ourselves, we are all ignorance and darkness; and what must be the dreadful case of those against whom he appears in arms? This has been a principal source of those various and opposite heresies and mistakes, which are the reproach of our holy profession, that vain man, though born a mere "wild ass's colt," Job, xi. has undertaken, by his own strength and wisdom, to decide authoritatively on the meaning of scripture, without being aware of the ignorance, prejudice,

judice, and weakneſs which influence his judgement in religious matters, without knowing the utter inability of the natural man to diſcern the things of God, and without attending to thoſe means the ſcripture itſelf has appointed for the redreſs of theſe evils. But would we not loſe our time and pains? would we wiſh not to be miſled ourſelves, or not to miſlead others? Let us aim at a humble ſpirit: let us reflect much on the majeſty and grandeur of the God we ſerve: let us adore his condeſcenſion in favouring us with a revelation of his will: let us learn to conſider the word of God, and the wiſdom of God, as terms of the ſame import; in a word, let us ſtudy to know ourſelves, our ſinfulneſs and ignorance; then we ſhall no longer read the ſcriptures with indifference or prepoſſeſſion, but with the greateſt reverence and attention, and with the moſt enlarged expectation.

I ſhall mention but one thing more upon this head, which is as neceſſary in itſelf as any of the preceding, and likewiſe neceſſary in order to obtain them, and that is *Prayer*. Sincerity, diligence, and humility, are the gifts of God; the bleſſing we ſeek in the exerciſe of them is in his hands; and he has promiſed to beſtow all good things, even "his Holy "Spirit, upon thoſe who aſk him." Prayer is indeed the beſt half of our buſineſs while upon earth, and that which gives ſpirit and efficacy to all the reſt. Prayer is not only our immediate duty, but the higheſt dignity, the richeſt privilege we are capable of receiving on this ſide eternity; and the neglect of it *implies* the deepeſt guilt, and *includes* the heavieſt puniſhment. A ſtranger to prayer, is equally a ſtranger to God and to happineſs, "like a wave "of the ſea, driven with the wind and toſſed," James, i. Are any of you, my friends, unacquainted with prayer? Then are you without God in the world, without a guide in proſperity, without reſource

fource in diſtreſs, without true comfort in life, and, while you continue ſo, without hope in death. But, eſpecially, you are utterly unqualified to "ſearch "the ſcripture." There is a veil upon the mind and heart of every man, (as the apoſtle aſſures us, 2 Cor. iii.), ſo that he can neither ſee nor embrace heavenly truths, till this impediment is removed:—the means of this is prayer. Therefore David ſays, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous "things out of thy law," Pſal cxix. He knew there were wonderful things contained in the law, but confeſſes himſelf incapable of diſcerning them till the Lord ſhould interpoſe. This he has promiſed to do in behalf of all who call upon him. But thoſe who ſeek not aſſiſtance from God, can find it no where elſe: "for every good and perfect gift is "from above, and cometh down from the Father of "lights," James, i. who hath ſaid, "If any man "lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God." A critical knowledge of the original languages, a ſkill in the cuſtoms and manners of the ancients, an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman claſſics, a peruſal of councils, fathers, ſcholiaſts, and commentators, a readineſs in the ſubtilities of logical diſputation;—theſe, in their proper place and ſubſerviency, may be of conſiderable uſe to clear, illuſtrate, or enforce the doctrines of ſcripture: but unleſs they are governed by a temper of humility and prayer; unleſs the man that poſſeſſes them accounts them altogether as nothing, without that aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God which is promiſed to guide believers into all truth; unleſs he ſeeks and prays for this guidance no leſs earneſtly than thoſe who underſtand nothing but their mother-tongue; I make no ſcruple to affirm, that all his *apparatus* of knowledge only tends to lead him ſo much the farther aſtray; and that a plain honeſt plowman, who reads no book but his Bible, and has no teacher but the God to whom he prays

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in secret, stands abundantly fairer for the attainment of true skill in divinity. But happy he, who by faith and prayer can realize the divine presence always with him! who is sincere in his intentions, diligent in the use of means, diffident of himself, yet full of trust and hope, that God, whom he desires to serve, will lead and guide him in the paths of peace and righteousness for his mercies sake, Psal. xxxi. Those things which are necessary for him to know, shall be made so plain, that he shall not mistake them; and those things with which he is not so *immediately* concerned, shall at least teach him humility; teach him to adore the depths of divine wisdom, and to long for that happy hour, when "all that is imper-"fect shall be done away; when we shall no more "see in part, but shall know even as we are known," 1 Cor. xiii.

II. I proceed to the *second* thing proposed, To shew *how* the scriptures testify of Christ. In general, it may be said, that he is the main design and subject, both of the whole scripture, and of each particular book. This will be easily allowed of the New Testament, but it is not so obvious with regard to several parts of the Old: I hope, therefore, it will not be unacceptable to those who love the word of God, if I consider this point something at large, and help them to discover the Lord Jesus Christ in almost every page of the Bible. This will be a new inducement to them to search the scriptures, when they shall perceive that many passages which they were accustomed to read with indifference, as hardly able to discern any wisdom or meaning in them, do directly testify of Christ.

What is expressed in the Old Testament (for of this I am now to speak) concerning Christ, may be reduced to three heads;—prophecies, types, and ceremonies. To open and trace these in their proper

per extent, would require volumes; but it is only a hint of each that the bounds of our preſent meeting will permit me to offer.

The firſt glimmering of light which dawned upon a loſt world was that promiſe (for I conſider the promiſes as a branch of prophecy) which God (who in the midſt of "judgement remembers "mercy") made to the woman, that "her ſeed "ſhould break the ſerpent's head," Gen. iii. This was abſolute and general, giving hopes of a recovery, but no information of perſon, time, or place; but the path of "this juſt one was as the light, "which ſhineth more and more to the perfect day," Prov. iv. In the time of Noah, the hope and deſire of all nations was reſtrained to the line of Shem, Gen. ix. and afterwards more expreſsly to the family of Abraham; when this divided into two branches, God, to ſhew that his purpoſe is of himſelf, and that he will do as pleaſeth him with his own, ſet aſide the elder, and confirmed to Jacob, the younger, "that "in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be "bleſſed," Gen. xxviii. Jacob had twelve ſons, which made a ſtill more explicit reſtriction neceſſary; accordingly the patriarch, before his death, declared this high privilege, of perpetuating the line of the Meſſiah, was fixed in the tribe of Judah, Gen. xlix. and the time of his advent was obſcurely marked out, by the promiſe "that the ſceptre ſhould not depart "from Judah till the Shiloh come." The laſt perſonal limitation was to David, 1 Chron. xvii. that of *his* family God would raiſe up the King, who ſhould reign for ever, and over all. Succeeding prophets gradually foretold the time, place, and circumſtances of his birth, the actions of his life, the tenor of his doctrine, the ſucceſs he met with, and the cauſe, deſign, and manner of his ſufferings and death; in ſhort, to almoſt every thing that we read

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in the gospel, we may annex the observation that the evangelists have made upon a few instances, (in order, as it may be presumed, to direct us in searching out the rest), "then was fulfilled that which was "spoken by the prophets." From them we learn, that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, in Bethlehem of Judah, four hundred and ninety years after the commandment given to rebuild Jerusalem; that he should begin his ministry in Galilee; that he should be despised and rejected of men, betrayed by one of his disciples, sold for thirty pieces of silver, with which money the Potters field should be afterwards purchased; "that he should be cut off, but "not for himself;" and that his death should be followed by the sudden and total ruin of the Jewish government. To compare these promises and prophecies, among themselves, and with their exact accomplishment recorded in the New Testament,—this alone would engage us in a close and profitable search into the scriptures, and would afford us the most convincing proofs of their divine original and excellence.

The types of Christ in the Old Testament may be considered as twofold, personal and relative. The former describing, under the veil of history, his character and offices as considered in himself; the latter teaching, under a variety of metaphors, the advantages those who believe in him should receive from him. Thus Adam, Enoch, Melchizedec, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samson, David, Solomon, and others, were in different respects types or figures of Christ. Some more immediately represented his person; others prefigured his humiliation; others referred to his exaltation, dominion, and glory. So in the latter sense the ark of Noah, the rainbow, the manna, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, were so many emblems pointing out the nature,

nature, neceſſity, means, and ſecurity of that ſalvation which the Meſſiah was to eſtabliſh for his people. Nor are theſe fanciful alluſions of our own making, but warranted and taught in ſcripture, and eaſily proved from thence, would time permit; for indeed there is not one of theſe perſons or things which I have named, but would furniſh matter for a long diſcourſe, if cloſely conſidered in this view, as typical of the promiſed Redeemer.

The like may be ſaid of the Levitical ceremonies. The law of Moſes is, in this ſenſe, a happy ſchoolmaſter to lead us unto Chriſt, Gal. iii.: and it may be proved beyond contradiction, that in theſe the goſpel was preached of old to all thoſe *Iſraelites indeed*, whoſe hearts were right with God, and whoſe underſtandings were enlightened by his Spirit. The ark of the covenant, the mercy-ſeat, the tabernacle, the incenſe, the altar, the offerings, the high prieſt with his ornaments and garments, the laws relating to the leproſy, the Nazarite, and the redemption of lands;—all theſe, and many more, which I have not time to mention, have a deep and important meaning beyond their outward appearance; each, in their place, pointed to "the Lamb of God who was to "take away the ſins of the world," John, i. derived their efficacy *from him*, and received their full accompliſhment *in him*.

Thus the Old and New Teſtament do mutually illuſtrate each other; nor can either be well underſtood ſingly. The Old Teſtament, in hiſtories, types, prophecies, and ceremonies, ſtrongly delineate him who, in the fulneſs of time, was to come into the world to effect a reconciliation between God and man. The New Teſtament ſhews, that all theſe characters and circumſtances were actually fulfilled in Jeſus of Nazareth; and that it was he of whom "Moſes in the law and the prophets did "write;"

" write;" and that we are not to look for another.

We read in Geneſis, chap. xxi. that Abraham had two ſons, Iſaac, the child of the promiſe, the ſon of his old age, by his wife Sarah, and Iſhmael, born ſome years before, of Hagar, the handmaid and ſervant of Sarah; that the latter, with his mother, were caſt out of the family: the occaſion ſome would think trivial, the anger and jealouſy of Sarah, becauſe Iſhmael had mocked her ſon. But when it was grievous to Abraham to put them away upon ſo ſlight a ground, God himſelf interpoſed, and commanded him to comply with her deſire. Had we heard no more of this, it is likely we ſhould have conſidered it as a piece of *family-hiſtory*, of no very great importance but to thoſe who were immediately concerned in it. We ſhould perhaps have wondered to find ſo much ſaid upon ſuch a ſubject, in a book which we profeſs to believe was written by divine inſpiration; we ſhould probably have preſumed to arraign the divine wiſdom, in deſcending to particulars, in which, according to our views of the fitneſs of things, we could diſcern nothing either intereſting or inſtructive. To guard us from theſe raſh miſtakes, to explain the true meaning of this particular tranſaction, and at the ſame time to furniſh us with a key for underſtanding many paſſages of the like nature, in which *human wiſdom* can diſcover neither beauty nor benefit; it has pleaſed God to favour us with an *infallible* expoſition of the whole matter. Not for the ſake of Abraham, or Iſaac, or Iſhmael, or Hagar, was this recorded; much leſs merely to gratify our curioſity. No: "Theſe "things," ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, "are an allegory; for theſe are the two covenants; the one "from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, "which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai "in

" in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which " now is, and is in bondage with her children. " But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is " the mother of us all.——Now we, brethren, as " Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as " then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted " him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is " now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? " Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the " son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with " the son of the free-woman. So, then, brethren, " we are not the children of the bond-woman, but " of the free," Gal. iv. I must not detain you by shewing at large how the apostle teaches us to discover the spirit and privileges of the gospel, together with what all who truly receive it must expect to encounter, in a passage which we might otherwise have thought superfluous, if not impertinent. Keep this in your mind when you read the scripture. Assure yourselves, that there is nothing vain or useless in the *word of God.* Compare one place with another, the law with the gospel, the prophets with the evangelists; pray unto God that he would open your understandings to understand the scriptures, as he did for the disciples, Luke, xxiv.; and in a little time you will find, that Christ is not only spoken of in a few verses, here and there, but that, as I said before, he is the main scope and subject of every book, and *almost* of every chapter.

I would add an instance or two of the meaning of the ceremonies, to what I have observed of Hagar in reference to the types. In the law of the Passover, it was especially enjoined, Exod. xii that not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken. Now, who would have thought that this referred to Christ! yet we see the evangelist expressly applies it to him, and is filled with wonder at the accomplishment.

compliſhment. The legs of thoſe who were crucified at the ſame time were purpoſely broken, John, xix.; but our Lord was paſſed by; and that it ſhould be ſo, was intimated near fifteen hundred years before, in this charge concerning the lamb. Again, we find, that in ſeveral places where a bullock was commanded to be ſlain for a ſin-offering, it is enjoined, that the fleſh and the ſkin ſhould be burnt without the camp; and from the epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. we learn, that this was not a ſlight or arbitrary circumſtance. We have there this explication: "For the bodies of thoſe beaſts whoſe blood "is brought into the ſanctuary, by the high-prieſt, "for ſin, were burnt without the camp: Wherefore "Jeſus alſo, that he might ſanctify the people with "his own blood, ſuffered without the gate. Let us "go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his "reproach." I muſt not enlarge any farther, or it were eaſy, by the clue the apoſtles in their writings have given us, to trace the important meaning of many of thoſe inſtitutions, which *ſcoffers*, who are wiſe in their own conceits, though neither acquainted with themſelves nor the ſubject, preſume to cenſure as frivolous. The ſenſe of the ſacred writings lies too deep for a captious, ſuperficial, volatile ſurvey; it muſt be a ſearch, a ſcrutiny; a humble, diligent, ſincere, and perſevering inquiry, or no ſatisfaction can be expected.

THE import of the ſcripture-teſtimony concerning Chriſt, which was the third thing I propoſed to ſpeak of, muſt be deferred to another opportunity. I hope what has been already ſaid, may, through the divine bleſſing, engage you "to ſearch "the ſcriptures." Remember it is the command of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: it is the only appointed way to the knowledge of him, whom to know, ſo as to love, ſerve, and obey him, is both the foun-

dation and the ſum of our happineſs, here and hereafter. We, as well as the Jews, think we have eternal life in the ſcripture, and ſhall, like them, be inexcuſeable and ſelf-condemned if we neglect it. Let us not be like fools, with a prize, an ineſtimable prize, in our hands, but without heart or ſkill to uſe it. Better would it have been for us to have lived and died in the wilds of America, without either means of grace or hopes of glory, than to ſlight this record which God has been pleaſed to give us of his Son. But happy the man whoſe delight is in the law of his God! He has ſure direction in every difficulty, certain comfort in every diſtreſs. The beauty of the precepts is preferable in his eye to "thouſands of gold and "ſilver," Pſal. cxix. The comforts of the promiſes are *sweeter* to his taſte, "than honey or the honey-"comb," Pſal. xix. He is happy in life; for the word of God is to him as a "fountain of living "water." He ſhall be happy in death; the promiſes of his God ſhall ſupport him through that dark valley; and he ſhall be happy for ever in the preſence and love of him for whoſe ſake he now ſearches the ſcripture: "Whom having not ſeen," 1 Pet. i. yet, from the teſtimony there given of him, "he loves; in whom, though now he ſees him "not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unſpeak-"able and full of glory."

Pleraque

Pleraque autem (ſi detur liberè loquendi venia) quæ etiam in Theologicis ſcholis tractantur, et magno cum apparatu et ſtrepitu docentur et diſputantur, ſpinoſum fortè acumen habent, ſed ſimul certè ſpinoſam ſterilitatem: lacerare et pungere poſſunt, animos paſcere non poſſunt: "Nemo "enim ex ſpinis uvas colligit unquam, aut ex tri- "bulis ficus." "Quorſum alta (inquit quidam) "de Trinitate diſputare, ſi careas humilitate, et "ſic Trinitati diſpliceas?" Et aptè St Auguſtinus ad illud Eſaiæ, "Ego Deus tuus docens te utilia;" "*utilia* (inquit) *docens*, non *subtilia*." Et hoc eſt quod opto et oro; ut nobis pro modulo noſtro ſubdocentibus, ille efficaciter vos perdoceat, qui cathedram in cœlo habens, corda docet in terris.

Archiep. Leighton. Prælect. Theol. pag. 4. edit. Lond. 1693. 4to.

SERMON VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

JOHN, v. 39.

Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

IN a former discourse on these words, I mentioned four things as highly requisite, if we would acquire an useful knowledge of the scripture,—sincerity with respect to the end, diligence in the use of means, a humble sense of our own weakness, and earnest prayer to God for the assistance of his grace and Spirit. To engage us to this practice, and perseverance therein, I next considered *how* the scriptures, when properly searched into and compared, do clearly, and in every part, testify of Christ, that he is the end of the law, the sum of the prophets, the completion of the promises, the scope of the types and ceremonies, and the great object of the whole Old-Testament dispensation.—I am now to say something to the third point I proposed,

III. CONCERNING the *import* of the testimony the scriptures bear to Christ.

The principal difficulties on this head are, where to begin on a subject absolutely boundless; and what to select that may be most suitable and useful to this assembly, from the immense variety of topics that offer. For this being the great end and design of the scripture, to proclaim the excellency of Christ Jesus our Lord, "that we through him

"may

" may have ſtrong conſolation," Heb. xii. it is inculcated in ſo many places, ſet in ſuch a diverſity of views, and couched under ſuch deep and comprehenſive expreſſions, that not only our preſent opportunity, but my whole future life, would be too ſhort, if I would collect, ſtate, and explain all that properly belongs to this ſingle article. For order's ſake, I ſhall reduce the little I muſt ſay at this time to three or four diſtinct particulars,—what the ſcripture teſtifies of Chriſt, as to his perſon, his offices, his power, and his love.

When we hear of ſome great undertaking to be performed, we inquire of courſe about the perſon who is chiefly concerned in it; ſo, when we are told of the mighty works Jeſus Chriſt engaged to perform, to redeem a loſt world, to ſatisfy divine juſtice, to make an end of ſin, to aboliſh death, and to bring life and immortality to light; the firſt queſtion that occurs is, Who is he? " Search the " ſcriptures," and you will have a clear and deciſive anſwer. The Prophet Iſaiah, *rapt into future times*, deſcribes him thus: " Unto us a child " is born, unto us a Son is given, and the govern- " ment ſhall be upon his ſhoulder: and he ſhall " be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty " God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of " Peace," Iſa. ix. 6. The union of the divine and human nature in the Meſſiah is ſo ſtrongly aſſerted, the names and attributes of God are ſo clearly aſcribed, in this paſſage, to one who ſhould be *born* into the world, that " he who runs may read; the " way-faring man, though a fool," muſt underſtand it; and it requires a conſiderable ſhare of unhappy ingenuity, to wreſt the words to any other than their obvious meaning. This text, if it ſtood alone in the Bible, (ſuppoſing the ſcriptures to be a revelation from God), would be a full warrant, and a firm foundation, for that great point of Chri-

ſtian faith and doctrine, That Jeſus Chriſt is very God, and very man; or, as the apoſtle better expreſſes it, "God manifeſt in the fleſh." But it is not alone: on the contrary, the Meſſiah is ſeldom mentioned, but ſomething is either ſaid of him, or referred to him, which teaches us the ſame important truth; "Behold the days come, (ſaith "the Lord by Jeremiah, chap. xxiii.), that I will "raiſe unto David a righteous Branch, and a "King ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute "judgement and juſtice in the earth. In his days, "Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafe-"ly: and this is his name whereby he ſhall be "called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUS-"NESS." Iſaiah in general ſtyles him, "A child "to be born;" Jeremiah more particularly, a "Branch of David." Iſaiah aſcribes to him the name of "The Mighty God;" Jeremiah ſays, he ſhall be called, "The Lord our Righteouſneſs." You have the word LORD in capital letters here, as in other places, where it is in the original JEHOVAH. Some of the names of God are occaſionally applied to inferior ſubjects, to angels, to magiſtrates, and ſometimes to idols. But *Jehovah* is allowed by all to ſignify the eſſential and incommunicable name of the Moſt High God. Yet this is not the only place where it is expreſsly and directly applied to the Meſſiah. David himſelf ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe: "The Lord "ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," Pſal. cx. That the Meſſiah was to be David's ſon, was known and acknowledged by the Jews in our Saviour's time; but how he could be the ſon of David, and yet his Lord, was a difficulty that utterly poſed and ſilenced the moſt learned Rabbis and Scribes among them; becauſe, being deſtitute of that ſincerity and humility we have before ſpoken of, they could not underſtand the ſcriptures,

tures, which were read in their ſynagogues every day.

Now, although this important doctrine was not to be diſcovered by the light of nature, or the powers of human reaſon, yet, ſince it has pleaſed God to make it known to us, our reaſon, humbly tracing the ſteps of divine revelation, can eaſily prove the expedience, and even the neceſſity, that it ſhould be ſo. When we are informed from ſcripture, that all mankind being ſunk into a ſtate of ſin and miſery, God had in great mercy appointed a perſon to atone for the one, and deliver them from the other; we may ſafely, from theſe principles, infer, by our own reaſon, 1ſt, That this perſon cannot be *mere man:* for as the whole human race, and conſequently every individual, is ſuppoſed to be previouſly involved in the ſame circumſtances of guilt and condemnation, it is impoſſible that any one of theſe ſhould be able either to anſwer or ſatisfy for himſelf, much leſs be qualified to interpoſe in behalf of another. From hence reaſon may aſcend a ſtep higher, and conclude, 2d, That no *mere creature*, however great and excellent, can undertake this part: for the two great points neceſſary in order to our redemption, to ſatisfy the juſtice of God, and to reſtore the divine image in man, are either of them beyond the ſphere of finite power. We read in the ſcripture of angels, archangels, thrones, principalities, and powers; and from ſeveral texts we may collect, that their number and excellencies are beyond any conceptions we can form. Could we ſuppoſe that the virtues and endowments of all theſe various and exalted beings were united and centered in one of them; however glorious this being would be in other reſpects, when we conſider him as a creature of the divine power, he will be found to be as *unfit*, and as *unable*, to interfere in the behalf of ſin-

ful man, as the meaneſt worm that crawls upon the earth. It is the duty of every being, great and ſmall, to be entirely devoted, according to the extent of its capacity, to the ſervice and glory of its great Creator; therefore an angel is no more capable than a man of performing the ſmalleſt work of ſupererogation. The higheſt archangel could not magnify the law of God, and make it honourable on the behalf of man, being already bound thereto for himſelf: much leſs can we ſuppoſe ſuch a being capable of expiating the ſins of mankind by ſuffering. If divine juſtice inſiſted on a propitiation, it muſt follow, that nothing leſs than an equivalent could be accepted. But what would be the temporary ſufferings of a creature, *or of all creatures*, in this view? A finite ſatisfaction, however heightened and exaggerated, would at laſt be infinitely ſhort of the demand. As to the other branch of redemption, the reſtoration of the image of God in the ſoul, I need only mention it; for it appears, at firſt glance, that this muſt be the prerogative of divine power alone to effect. It remains, therefore, that the deliverance of mankind could only be attempted by him, whom we are aſſured by the apoſtle, agreeable to the paſſages already cited, is over all, God bleſſed for ever.

That the Son of God ſhould take upon him the nature and circumſtances of our humanity, ſin excepted, in order to atone for our tranſgreſſions, is indeed ſuch an inſtance of condeſcenſion and love, as muſt for ever dazzle and aſtoniſh the brighteſt underſtandings. It is true, ſome perſons in theſe refined times affect to ſpeak of this point with admirable coolneſs and preciſion. *But in the beginning it was not ſo.* Either the Apoſtle Paul was leſs maſter of his temper, or more unequal to ſublime ſpeculations, than theſe gentlemen, or elſe we muſt allow he had a very different view of the ſubject; for

for he cannot mention it without appearing to be tranſported, and (if I may uſe the expreſſion) ſwallowed up by the thought: his ideas ſeem too great for words: and it is well if his beſt attempts to explain himſelf have not expoſed him, in the judgement of ſome of his readers, to the charge of *ſolecism*. However, though this doctrine, above any other, is a proof that God "is able to do for "us exceeding abundantly beyond all we could "aſk or think," it is not, upon the premiſes I before mentioned, in the leaſt repugnant to right reaſon; rather it is exactly calculated to remove all thoſe ſurmiſes which would ariſe in the mind of a *reaſonable ſinner* upon the firſt intimation of poſſible forgiveneſs. In our nature Chriſt fulfilled the law which we had broken; he ſuſtained the penalty we had incurred; he vanquiſhed the enemies we had to encounter; he trod the path which he has marked out for us; he is entered in our name into that heaven he has promiſed us; and retains a ſympathy with us in all our ſufferings and temptations, "in as much as he himſelf has ſuffered, be-"ing tempted," Heb. ii.

I am next to conſider the teſtimony of ſcripture concerning the offices of Chriſt. Theſe are, in general, included in the character of Mediator. "There is one God, and one Mediator between "God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus;" 1 Tim. ii. In this word is ſummed up all that Chriſt has done, now does, or will do hereafter, either on the part of God or man. But for our better apprehenſion, it is propoſed to us under three diſtinct and principal views, anſwerable to the three particulars in which the miſery of fallen man does principally conſiſt.

And, firſt, Man, having departed from God, "became vain in his imaginations, and his fooliſh "heart was darkened," Rom. i. ſo that he totally

loſt the knowledge of his Creator, and how entirely his happineſs depended thereon. He forgot God and himſelf, and ſunk ſo low as to worſhip the work of his own hands. His life became vain and miſerable; in proſperity, without ſecurity or ſatisfaction; in adverſity, without ſupport or reſource; his death dark and hopeleſs; no pleaſing reflection on the paſt, no ray of light on the future. Such was the unhappy caſe when Chriſt undertook the office of a prophet; in which character, under various diſpenſations, firſt by his ſervants inſpired of old, and afterwards more clearly in his own perſon, and by his apoſtles, he has inſtructed us in the things pertaining to our peace: not only renewing in us the knowledge of the true God, which, where revelation prevailed not, was univerſally loſt out of the world, but diſcloſing to us the counſels of divine love and wiſdom in our favour, thoſe great things "which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard," and which never could have entered "into the "heart of man to conceive," had not he who dwelt in the boſom of the Father declared them to us. We can now give a ſufficient anſwer to that queſtion, which muſt have for ever overwhelmed every ſerious awakened mind, "Wherewithal ſhall "I appear before the Moſt High God?" Mic. vi. We have now learnt how God can declare and illuſtrate his righteouſneſs and truth, by that very act which, without reſpect to ſatisfaction given, would ſeem the higheſt impeachment of both, I mean his juſtifying the ungodly. We have now a *glass* by which we can diſcover the preſence of the Creator in every part of his creation, and a *clue* to lead us through the myſterious mazes of divine providence. But who can enumerate the various, the important, the intereſting leſſons we receive from this Heavenly Teacher, when, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, he powerfully applies

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his written word to the hearts of his real disciples, who *search the scriptures* with a sincere desire to be made wise unto salvation! Whatever is necessary to make life useful and comfortable, and to gild the gloom of death with the bright prospect of a glorious immortality, is there contained: so that, instructed by these writings alone, a poor illiterate mechanic has been often enabled to converse upon a dying-bed with more dignity, certainty, and influence, than any, or all the philosophers, ancient or modern, could attain.

But, besides the natural ignorance of fallen man, he was chargeable with aggravated *guilt*. Guilt and ignorance are reciprocally causes and consequences of each other. Every additional guilt tends to increase the stupidity of the human soul; and every increase of this, increases in the same proportion the natural indisposition for the practice or the love of virtue makes the soul more blind to consequences, more base in its pursuits, and thus become a more willing and assiduous servant of iniquity. No wonder, therefore, that when the understanding was totally darkened as to the *knowledge* of God, the will and affections became wholly disobedient to his *law*. But when a divine light has in some measure discovered the heart to itself, and at the same time set an offended God in view, every such sensible sinner would undoubtedly imitate our first parents, and fly (were it possible) from the presence of his Maker and his Judge. "I heard thy voice," says Adam, "and "I hid myself, for I was afraid," Gen. iii.—Vain attempt! and if it was practicable, a dreadful alternative, since absence from God imports the utmost misery to a creature who can be happy only in his favour. But here the scriptures bring us unspeakable comfort, testifying of Christ as our great High-Priest. To point out and illustrate

this part of his character, is the chief end and design of the whole Levitical law; the main points of which are explained, and applied to our blessed Lord, throughout the epistle to the Hebrews. The principal parts of the priest's office were, to sacrifice in behalf of the people, to make atonement, to pray for them, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. No sacrifices could be offered or accepted, no blessings expected, but through the hands of the priests whom God had appointed. Thus Christ, the High-Priest of our profession, offered himself a sacrifice without either spot or blemish: he entered with his own blood within the vail, to the immediate presence of our offended God; and through him peace and good-will is proclaimed to sinful men. He continues still to exercise the other part of his appointment; he makes continual intercession for his people; he presents their prayers and imperfect services acceptable before the throne; he gives them confidence and access to draw nigh to God; and he bestows upon them those gifts and blessings which are the fruits of his sufferings and obedience. The Levitical priests were, like their people, sinners; and were therefore constrained first to make atonement for themselves; they were mortal, therefore their service passed from hand to hand; their sacrifices were imperfect, therefore needed continual repetition, and had at last only a typical and ceremonial efficacy; for it was not possible "the "blood of bulls and goats," Heb. ix. and x. could remove either the guilt or pollution of sin. "The "law made nothing perfect." But Jesus, the "Mediator of the new covenant," is "such a High-"Priest as became us; holy, harmless, undefiled, "separate from sinners; who needeth not (as "those of old) to offer sacrifice, first for his own "sins, and then for the people; for this he did "once,

" once, when he offered up himself," Heb. vii. The great inference from this doctrine, several times repeated by the apostle in a variety of phrase, is, that we may now have boldness to appear before God, that our prayers and services are pleasing in his sight, and all the blessings of grace and glory ready to be bestowed on us, if we faithfully apply for them, through the merits of his Son.

Once more. Man is not only ignorant of God and himself, and too full of guilt to plead in his own name, but he is likewise weak and defenceless; unable to make his way through the opposition that withstands his progress to eternal life, or to secure him from the many enemies " that rise up against him," Psal. iii. We read, that when the Gibeonites made a league with Joshua, Jos. ix. which was the only step could save them from utter ruin, the neighbouring states and cities all united to destroy them: so the soul that is desirous to submit to Jesus Christ, immediately finds itself in the midst of war; the world, the flesh, and the devil, unite their forces, either to recal such a one to the practice and service of sin, or to distress him to the uttermost for forsaking it. And none could support this conflict, if not themselves supported by a higher hand. But Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, the true Captain of the Lord's hosts, reveals himself in his word as the King of his Church. He can inspire the fainting soul with unseen supplies: " he, when the enemy comes in like a flood," Isa. lix. can by his Spirit lift up a standard against him; he can take the prey even out of the hand of the mighty. He has said it of his church in general, and he will make it good to every individual that trusts in him, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them. What though a sense of the guilt and remaining power of sin often

lls

fills the humble ſoul with inexpreſſible diſtreſs! He that ſtills the raging of the ſea, and the violence of the winds, with a word, can with equal eaſe calm all the unruly motions of the mind. What though the world oppoſes in every quarter, and preſents ſnares and terrors all around! what though rage or contempt, threats or allurements, are by turns, or altogether, employed to ruin us! behold, "greater is he that is in us, than he that "is in the world," 1 John, iv.; "Chriſt has over-"come the world for us," John, xvi. and has promiſed to make us conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, in our turn. What though "the devil "goes about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he "may devour!" 1 Pet. vi.; it is an argument of the ſtrongeſt kind for watchfulneſs and prayer. But we need not fear him: The "beloved of the "Lord ſhall dwell in ſafety," Deut. xxxiii.: The "Lord ſhall cover him all the day long; he ſhall "deliver him from the ſnare of the fowler," Pſ. xci. "His truth ſhall be a ſhield and buckler" to all who inliſt under his banner; and at length, yea, ſhortly, "the God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan "under our feet," Rom. xvi.

It is thus the ſcriptures, to help the weakneſs of our apprehenſions, teſtify of Chriſt, under the threefold view of Prophet, Prieſt, and King of his people. Theſe are his principal and leading characters, which include and imply the reſt; for the time would fail to ſpeak of him, as he is declared to be their head, huſband, root, foundation, ſun, ſhield, ſhepherd, lawgiver, exemplar, and forerunner. In brief, there is hardly any comfortable relation or uſeful office amongſt men, hardly any object in the viſible creation, which either diſplays beauty, or produces benefit, but what is applied in the word of God, to illuſtrate the excellence and ſufficiency of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

The

The intent of all is, that we may learn to truſt him, and delight to ſerve him; for theſe muſt go together. Whoever would be benefited by his mediation as a Prieſt, muſt ſubmit to his inſtructions as a Prophet, and yield him univerſal obedience as a King. Fatal are the miſtakes in this matter now in the world. Some talk highly of the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, who are little ſolicitous to keep his commandments: others labour in the very fire to obſerve his law; but "being ignorant of "God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh "their own," Rom. x. they labour to no purpoſe. Dependence on the merits of Chriſt, and obedience to his commands, are inſeparably united; and only the man who aims at *both*, can attain to *either*.

I ſhould now lay before you ſome ſcripture-teſtimonies of the *power* and *love of Chriſt;* but I have anticipated this part of my ſubject in what I have already ſaid. His divine nature proclaims his power, his offices diſplay his love. We have ſeen, that *he emptied himſelf* of his eternal glories; that "he bowed the heavens, and came down in the "form of a ſervant;" that he ſubmitted to all imaginable ſufferings; all that the malice of men, all that the avenging juſtice of God could inflict; and having by this means opened the kingdom of heaven, and taken poſſeſſion there, in behalf of all believers, he has cauſed the glad tidings of ſalvation to be publiſhed through the world; declaring, "that whoſoever cometh to him, (without "one exception), he will in no ways caſt out," John, vi. Are not theſe proofs of unſpeakable, unexampled love? We have ſeen, that he fully performed the work he undertook; "that he has "made an end of ſin," Dan. ix.; "brought in an "everlaſting righteouſneſs, ſpoiled principalities "and powers," Eph. ii.; triumphed over all our "enemies,

" enemies, broke down the partition-wall, and " brought life and immortality to light by his go- " fpel," 1 Tim. i. We read, that he is exalted highly; " that God has given him a name that is " above every name," Phil. ii.; that he is " far " above all principality, and might, and dominion:" and what more can be faid of his power? Read his own declaration, " All power is given me in " heaven and in earth," Matth. xxviii. Were thefe two points, the power and the love of Chrift, rightly underftood, and fully believed, earth would be full of heaven. But, alas! we are *fools, and flow of heart* to receive all that *Mofes and the prophets*, Luke, xxiv. the *evangelifts and apoftles*, have written for our inftruction. From hence proceeds our indifference, and that we need fo much to be preffed *to fearch the fcriptures*, though we readily acknowledge that in them we *have the words of eternal life*.

IV. It remains, therefore, in the fourth and laft place, that I add a few words to recommend, and enforce the command in the text, " fearch the " fcriptures," from the argument there fubjoined, " for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" and we think right; for it " is eternal life to know " the only true God, and Jefus Chrift, whom he hath fent," John, xvii: and every article of this knowledge is contained in the Old and New Teftament; nor can any part of it be met with any where elfe. Yet let conference judge this day, as in the prefence of " the living God, the fearcher " of hearts," before whom our private judgements muft fhortly come under a review: has any book a fmaller fhare of the time, the memory, or the affections of many of us, than this book of God? Do not the fucceffive returns of bufinefs and amufement fo far engrofs our time and our thoughts,

that we have either no leiſure, or no diſpoſition, to attend to the things which pertain to our peace? Conſider, "in them we think we have eternal life." We know we are poſting to eternity as faſt as the wings of time can carry us; we know that the conſequences of our behaviour in this ſpan of life will attend us into an inviſible unalterable ſtate; and we confeſs, that the neceſſary directions for our conduct in theſe moſt important and precarious circumſtances, are to be found only in the Bible: what words then can deſcribe our fatal inſenſibility, if, all this acknowledged, we have no heart to conſult, or to value, this ineſtimable treaſure put into our hands?

Many inquiries, more curious than uſeful, have been ſtarted concerning the divine procedure with the Heathen nations, and thoſe who never heard of the goſpel of peace. "The Judge of all the "earth will (undoubtedly) do right," Gen. xviii. and will be juſtified at the great day, when every man ſhall receive according to their works. Till then we muſt *wait* for the knowledge of what he has not ſeen fit to reveal. But this much he has already told us, that however it may go with thoſe who know not the goſpel, dreadful will be the doom of thoſe who, having it publiſhed among them, refuſe to obey it. "The ſervant who knew "not his maſter's will ſhall be beaten with few "ſtripes," Luke, xii. But this will not be our caſe; at leaſt our ignorance will be rather an aggravation than an excuſe; a wilful, obſtinate, infatuated ignorance. We have the words of eternal life in our hands; "line upon line, precept upon "precept:" But how do we imitate thoſe (whom perhaps we have been ready to blame) ſpoken of in the parable, who, when they received a kind and gracious invitation to a royal feaſt, made light of it, and "all with one conſent began to make "excuſe!"

" excuſe!" Luke, xiv. It is eaſy to apply this to the Jews of old: ſo David could clearly judge in the caſe of the rich man who killed his poor neighbour's lamb, 2 Sam. xii.; but had not the prophet helped him, he would not have collected that he himſelf was the perſon intended. But to bring the general truths of ſcripture home to the heart is the work of God; and perhaps, while I am ſpeaking at random, he may rouſe the conſciences of ſome to ſay in particular, *Thou art the man.* Then they will ſoon ſee how much it behoves them to *ſearch the ſcriptures,* when they underſtand the weighty meaning of the words, *eternal life.*

Some of us, I hope, do already make conſcience of frequent reading the ſcriptures; but let us remember the force of the word *ſearch.* It is not a careleſs ſuperficial reading, or diſpatching ſuch a number of chapters in a day, as a taſk, that will anſwer the end. I have already reminded you, that it is a buſineſs will need your beſt application; a ſerious, impartial, humble, perſevering inquiry, accompanied with earneſt prayer for the light and aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit. When we ſet about it in this method, we ſhall ſoon find happy effects; pleaſure and inſtruction will go hand in hand; and our knowledge advance as the growing light. The precepts ſhall inſpire us with true wiſdom; teach us how to order all our affairs, reſpecting both worlds; to fill up our ſeveral ſtations in life with propriety, uſefulneſs, and comfort; and to avoid the numerous evils and diſtreſſes which thoſe who live by no rule, or by any other rule than God's word, are perpetually running into. The *promiſes* ſhall be a ſupport in every trouble, a medicine in every ſickneſs, a ſupply in every need. Above all, the ſcriptures will repay our trouble, as they teſtify of Chriſt. The more we read of his perſon, offices, power, love,

love, doctrine, life, and death, the more our hearts will cleave to him: we shall, by insensible degrees, be transformed into his Spirit. We shall, with the apostle, say, "I know in whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. Every thing we see shall be at once a *memorial* to remind us of our Redeemer, and a *motive* to animate us in his service. And at length we shall be removed to see him as he is, without a cloud, and without a veil; to be for ever with him; to behold and to share the glories of that heavenly kingdom "which (Matth. xxv.) he has prepared (for "his followers) from before the foundation of the "world." Amen.

SER-

SERMONS

Preached in the Parish-Church of Olney, in Buckinghamshire.

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

Ser.
1. The ſmall ſucceſs of a Goſpel-Miniſtry.
2. The Myſteries of the Goſpel hid from many.
3. Of thoſe from whom the Goſpel-Doctrines are hid.
4. The nature of Spiritual Revelation, and who are favoured with it.
5. The Sovereignty of Divine Grace aſſerted and illuſtrated.
6. Of the Perſon of Chriſt.
7. Of the Authority of Chriſt.
8. The Glory and Grace of God revealed in Jeſus Chriſt.
9. Labouring and heavy-laden Sinners deſcribed.
10. Of Coming to Chriſt.

Ser.
11. Of Believers Reſt in Chriſt.
12. Of the Yoke of Chriſt.
13. The Service of Chriſt eaſy and pleaſant.
14. Believers cautioned againſt Miſconduct in their Profeſſion.
15. The Extent and Sanction of the Third Commandment.
16. The Chriſtian Life compared to a Race.
17. No Acceſs to God but by the Goſpel of Chriſt.
18. Of a Living and a Dead Faith.
19. Guilt removed, and Peace reſtored.
20. Of the Aſſurance of Faith.

Bleſſed is the people that know the joyful ſound: they ſhall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name ſhall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteouſneſs ſhall they be exalted, Pſal. lxxxix. 15. 16.

To the INHABITANTS of the Parish of OLNEY.

My Dear Friends,

I Have principally two motives for publiſhing theſe Diſcourſes. The one is, to exhibit a ſpecimen of the doctrine that is taught and moſt ſurely believed amongſt us, to ſatisfy thoſe who deſire information, and to ſtop, if poſſible, the mouth of Slander. I chearfully ſubmit them to examination, in full confidence that they contain nothing of moment which is not agreeable to the general ſtrain of the word of God, and to the principles of the church whereof I am a miniſter, as ſpecified in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies. And that what I now print is to the ſame purport with the uſual courſe of my preaching, I doubt not but all who ſtatedly hear me, will do me the juſtice to acknowledge.

My other motive is, A deſire of promoting your edification. It is my comfort that many of you live by the truths of the goſpel, and highly prize them. You will not therefore be unwilling to view the ſubſtance of what you once heard with acceptance. But it is to be feared, that the far greater part of the congregation have need to have the things pertaining to their peace preſſed upon them again and again, for a different reaſon; not becauſe they know them, and therefore love to have them brought to their remembrance, but becauſe they have hitherto heard them without effect. For the ſake of both, therefore, I am willing to leave an abiding teſtimony amongſt you. I hereby take each of your conſciences to witneſs, that I am clear of your blood; and that, to the beſt of my knowledge and ability, I have not ſhunned to declare the whole counſel of God.

In the choice of the ſubjects I have ſelected for publication,

publication, I have not been ſolicitous to compriſe a ſuccinct ſcheme of Goſpel-doctrine, but have given the preference to ſuch topics, which the peculiar circumſtances of the times, and of my hearers, make me deſirous might be had in continual remembrance.

The Expoſition of the Third Commandment, which was firſt delivered in your hearing, I afterwards preached (nearer the form in which it now appears) at London; and as it led me to touch on ſome particulars of a very public and intereſting concern, I have given it a place in this volume. And I ſhall think myſelf happy indeed, if it may pleaſe God to give weight to the teſtimony of ſo obſcure a perſon, with reſpect to a grievance under which the nation groans.

As long diſcourſes are in many reſpects inconvenient, I have choſe to publiſh no more than a brief ſummary of what you heard more at large from the pulpit. And as I aim to ſpeak plain truths to a plain people, I have purpoſely avoided any ſtudied ornaments in point of expreſſion, being deſirous to accommodate myſelf to the apprehenſions of the moſt ignorant.

May it pleaſe the God of all grace to accompany my feeble endeavours to promote the knowledge of his truth with the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit! And I earneſtly intreat all who know how to draw near to a throne of grace by Jeſus Chriſt, to ſtrive mightily in prayer for me, that I may ſtand faſt in the faith, and increaſe in the knowledge of Jeſus the Saviour; and that, for his ſake, I may labour, without fear of fainting, in the ſervice to which he has been pleaſed to call me. May the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all!

I am your affectionate Friend, and Servant in the Goſpel of Chriſt,

JOHN NEWTON.

ERY. Jan. 20. 1767.

SER-

SERMON I.

THE SMALL SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL-MINISTRY CONSIDERED.

MATTH. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

OUR bleſſed Lord perfectly knew beforehand the perſons who would profit by his miniſtry: but his obſervations, conduct, and diſcourſes, were intended as a pattern and inſtruction to his followers. He is ſaid to have marvelled at the unbelief of ſome, and at the faith of others; not as though either was ſtrange to him, who was acquainted with all hearts, and always knew what he himſelf could do; but it is ſpoken of him as a man, and to ſhew how his miniſters and people ſhould be affected upon the like occaſions. In the preceding verſes he had been ſpeaking of Capernaum, and other places, where his mighty works had been performed in vain. He had denounced a ſentence againſt them; and foretold that their puniſhment would be heavier in proportion to the greatneſs of the privileges they had abuſed. But this was not his pleaſing work. Mercy and grace were his delight, and he uſually expreſſed ſorrow and pain for the obſtinacy of ſinners. He wept for his avowed enemies, and prayed for the murderers who nailed him to the croſs. It was not without grief that he declared the approaching doom of theſe cities; yet, raiſing his thoughts from earth to heaven, he

acquiesced in the will of his heavenly Father, and expressed the highest satisfaction in his appointment. He knew, that, however some would harden themselves, there was a remnant who would receive the truth, and that the riches and glory of the divine sovereignty and grace would be magnified. Before I enter upon the particulars, this connection of the words will afford us ground for some observations.

I. That the small success and efficacy of the preached gospel upon multitudes who hear it, is a subject of wonder and grief to the ministers and people of God. It was so to our Lord Jesus, considered as a preacher and messenger; and they, so far as they have received his Spirit, judge and act as he did.

1. Those who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, have had such a powerful experience in their own souls of the necessity and value of the gospel, that in their first warmth, and till painful experience has convinced them of the contrary, they can hardly think it possible that sinners should stand out against its evidence. They are ready to say, "Surely it is because they are ignorant; they "have not had opportunity of considering the evil "of sin, the curse of the law, and the immense "goodness of God manifested in his Son; but "when these things shall be plainly and faithfully "set before them, surely they will submit, and "thankfully receive the glad tidings." With such sanguine hopes Melancthon entered the ministry at the dawn of the Reformation: he thought he had only to speak and to be heard, in order to convince; but he soon found himself mistaken, and that the love of sin, the power of prejudice, and the devices of Satan, were such obstacles in his way, as nothing less than the mighty operations of the

the Spirit of God could break through. And all who preach upon his principles, and with his views, have known something of his disappointment. Speaking from the feelings of a full heart, they are ready to expect that others should be no less affected than themselves. But when they find that they are heard with indifference, perhaps with contempt; that those whose salvation they long for, are enraged against them for their labour of love; that they cannot prevail upon their dearest friends, and nearest relatives; this grieves and wounds them to the heart.

2. They have been convinced themselves, that unbelief was the worst of all their sins: and, therefore, though they pity all who live in the practice of sin, yet they have a double grief to see them reject the only means of salvation; and that this contempt will lie more heavily upon them, than any thing they can be charged with besides. It gladdens the heart of a minister to see a large and attentive assembly; but how is this joy damped by a just fear, lest any, lest many of them should receive this grace of God in vain, and have cause at last to bewail the day when the name of Jesus was first sounded in their ears!

It seems plain, then, that those who are indifferent about the event of the gospel, who satisfy themselves with this thought, that the elect shall be saved, and feel no concern for unawakened sinners, make a wrong inference from a true doctrine, and know not what spirit they are of. Jesus wept for those who perished in their sins. St Paul had great grief and sorrow of heart for the Jews, though he gives them his character, "They please not "God, and they are contrary to all men." It well becomes us, while we admire distinguishing grace to ourselves, to mourn over others: and inasmuch as secret things belong to the Lord, and we know

not but some of whom we have at present but little hopes, may at last be brought to the knowledge of the truth, we should be patient and forbearing, after the pattern of our heavenly Father, and endeavour, by every probable and prudent means, to stir them up to repentance, remembering that they cannot be more distant from God, than by nature we were ourselves.

II. The best relief against those discouragements we meet with from men, is to raise our thoughts to God and heaven. For this the Lord Jesus is our precedent here. He said, "I thank thee, O "Father." The word (*a*) signifies, to confess, to promise, or consent, and to praise. As if it had been said, "I glorify thy wisdom in this respect, I "acknowledge and declare that it is thy will, and I "express my own consent and approbation." Our Lord's views of the divine counsels were perfect, and therefore his satisfaction was complete. It is said, "He rejoiced in spirit *," when he uttered these words. And the more we increase in faith, and in the knowledge of God, the more we shall be satisfied in his appointments, and shall see and say, "He hath done all things well." It is needful for our comfort to be well established in the truth suggested in my text, That the Lord hath provided for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and that his counsels shall surely stand. From this doctrine we may infer,

1. That where the faithful labours and endeavours of ministers and others, to promote the knowledge of grace and the practice of holiness, fail of success, yet they shall be accepted. The servants of Christ may in their humble measure adopt the

(*a*) The original word occurs Matth. xi. 25. Luke, xxii. 6. and Rom. xv. 9.

* Luke, x. 21.

the words of their Lord and Master, in the prophet: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I "be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God "shall be my strength *." When he sent forth his first disciples, he directed them whenever they entered to say, "Peace be to this house! and if a son "of peace be there," if there be any who thankfully accept your salutation and message, "your "peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall return to "you again: †." That is, your good wishes and endeavours shall not be lost for want of proper objects; but when they seem without effect on others, shall be productive of the happiest consequences to yourselves. You shall receive all you were desirous to communicate. Thus his ministers are to declare his whole will, whether men will hear, or whether they shall forbear. And if they do this with a single eye to his glory, and in humble dependence upon his blessing, they are not answerable for the event, they shall in no wise lose their reward.

2. Faithful endeavours in the service of the gospel shall not wholly fail. Though all will not hear, some certainly shall both hear and obey. Though all are by nature equally averse and incapable, yet there shall be "a willing people in the day of God's "power ‡." If the wise and prudent turn away from the truth, there are babes to whom it shall be revealed. The Lord renews unto us a pledge of his faithfulness in this concern every time the rain descends. For thus he has promised, "As the rain "cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and "returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, "and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may "give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: "so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my "mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it

* Isa. xlix. 5. † Luke, x. 6. ‡ Psal. cx. 3.

" shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall " prosper in the thing whereto I sent it *."

3. The divine sovereignty is the best thought we can retreat to for composing and strengthening our minds under the difficulties, discouragements, and disappointments, which attend the publication of the gospel. The more we give way to reasonings and curious inquiries, the more we shall be perplexed and baffled. When Jeremiah † had been complaining of some things that were too hard for him, the Lord sent him to the potter's house, and taught him to infer, from the potter's power over the clay, the just right which the Lord of all hath to do what he will with his own. It is only the pride of our own hearts that prevents this consideration from being perfectly conclusive and satisfactory. How many schemes derogatory from the free grace of God, tending to darken the glory of the gospel, and to depreciate the righteousness of the Redeemer, have taken their rise from vain unnecessary attempts to vindicate the ways of God; or rather to limit the actings of Infinite Wisdom to the bounds of our narrow understandings, to sound the depths of the divine counsels with our feeble plummets, and to say to Omnipotence, " Hitherto " shalt thou go, and no farther." But upon the ground of the divine sovereignty, we may rest satisfied and stable: for if God appoints and over-rules all, according to the purpose of his own will, we have sufficient security, both for the present and the future.

1st, For the present, we may firmly expect, what scripture and reason concur to assure us, That " the Judge of all the earth will do right." Whatever to us appears otherwise in his proceedings, should be charged to the darkness and weakness of our minds. We know, that in every point of science

* Isa. lv. 10. † Jer. xviii. 6.

ſcience difficulties and objections occur to young beginners, which at firſt view may ſeem almoſt unanſwerable; but as knowledge increaſes, the difficulties gradually ſubſide, and at laſt we perceive they were *chiefly* owing to the defects of our apprehenſion. In divinity it is wholly ſo; "God is light, "and in him is no darkneſs at all:" his revealed will is, like himſelf, juſt, holy, pure in the whole, and perfectly conſiſtent in every part. We may ſafely reſt upon this general maxim, That "the Judge "of all the earth ſhall do right." Though he does not give us a particular account of his dealings, and we are not fully able to comprehend them; yet we ought, againſt all appearances and proud reaſonings, to ſettle it firmly in our minds, that every thing is conducted worthy the views which God has given us of himſelf in his holy word, as a being of infinite juſtice, wiſdom, goodneſs, and truth. And farther,

2*dly*, For the future. He has appointed a day when he will make it appear that he *has done* right. Though clouds and darkneſs are now upon his proceedings, they ſhall ere long be removed. When all his deſigns in providence and grace are completed; when the preſent imperfect ſtate of things ſhall be finiſhed; when the dead, ſmall and great, are ſummoned to ſtand before him; then the great Judge will condeſcend to unfold the whole train of his diſpenſations, and will juſtify his proceedings before angels and men. Then every preſumptuous cavil ſhall be ſilenced, every difficulty ſolved. His people ſhall admire his wiſdom, his enemies ſhall confeſs his juſtice. The deſtruction of thoſe who periſh ſhall be acknowledged deſerved, and of themſelves; and the redeemed of the Lord ſhall aſcribe all the glory of their ſalvation to him alone. What we ſhall then ſee, it is now our duty and our comfort aſſuredly to believe.

THE great subject of our Saviour's joy, and which, so far as it is apprehended, will bear up his servants above all their difficulties and disappointments, I mean, the consideration of the sovereign hand of God directing the success of his word when and where he pleases, we must defer speaking of till the next opportunity. And we shall close at present with a few inferences from what has been said thus far, by way of introduction.

1. Take heed how you hear. The gospel of salvation, which is sent to you, will be either a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," to every soul of you. There is no *medium*. Though, in a common and familiar way of speaking, we sometimes complain that the gospel is preached without effect, there is in reality no possibility that it can be without effect. An effect it must and will have upon all who hear it. Happy they who receive and embrace it as a joyful sound, the unspeakable gift of God's love. To these it will be a "savour of life unto life." It will communicate life to the soul at first, and maintain that life, in defiance of all opposition, till it terminates in glory. But woe, woe to those who receive it not. It will be to them "a savour of death unto death." It will leave them under the sentence of death, already denounced against them by the law which they have transgressed; and it will consign them to eternal death, under the heaviest aggravations of guilt and misery. Remember the doom of Capernaum, and why it was denounced. Jesus preached amongst them the words of eternal life, and they rejected him. This was all. In other things, perhaps, they were no worse than their neighbours, and probably disdained to hear themselves judged worthy of a heavier punishment than Sodom, and those cities which for their abominations were consumed with fire from heaven. But our Lord assures us, it shall be

be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for those who slight his word. For this guilt and condemnation is not confined to the Jews who rejected his person, but extended to all who should at any time treat his gospel with contempt. However inconsiderable his ministers are in other respects, if they faithfully deliver his message, he has declared himself closely interested in the reception they meet with: "He that receiveth you, "receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despi-"seth both me and him that sent me *." It is therefore at your peril to treat what we say with indifference, (if we speak agreeably to the scripture); the word of God which we preach will judge you at the last day.

2. Be afraid of being wise in your own eyes, lest you should approach to the characters of those from whom the righteous God sees fit to hide the knowledge of those truths, without which they cannot be saved. The gospel is not proposed to you to ask your opinion of it, that it may stand or fall according to your decision; but it peremptorily demands your submission. If you think yourselves qualified to judge and examine it by that imperfect and depraved light which you call your reason, you will probably find reasons enough to refuse your assent. Reason is properly exercised in the ordinary concerns of life, and has so far a place in religious inquiries, that none can or do believe the gospel, without having sufficient reasons for it. But you need a higher light, the light of God's Spirit, without which the most glorious displays of his wisdom will appear foolishness to you. If you come simple, dependent, and teachable; if you pray from your heart, with David, "Open thou mine eyes, "that I may see wondrous things in thy law †;" you will be heard and answered; you will grow in the

* Matth. x. 40. † Psal. cxix. 18.

knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: but if you neglect this, and trust in yourselves, as supposing this promised assistance of the Holy Spirit unnecessary, the glorious light of the gospel will shine upon you in vain; for Satan will maintain such hold of you by this pride of your hearts, as still to keep you in bondage and darkness, that you shall neither see it, nor desire to see it.

3. Those of you who have some spiritual apprehensions of these things, have reason to praise God, that you see a *little*. You were once quite blind; you neither saw your disease, nor your remedy. You could discern nothing of the excellence of Christ, or the beauties of holiness. But now the eyes of your understanding are in some measure enlightened. It is the grace of God has made you thus far to differ from what you once were, and from what multitudes around you still are. Be thankful. Accept it as a token for good. Be not discouraged that the beginnings are small; but wait on the Lord, and they shall be increased. Seek him by prayer. Converse with your Bibles. Attend upon the public ordinances. In the humble use of these means, (while you endeavour to act faithfully according to the light you have already received), you shall gradually advance in wisdom and comfort. The Christian growth is not instantaneous, but by degrees, as the early dawn increases in brightness till the perfect day *, and as the corn comes forward surely, though unperceived †. In this manner your views of gospel-truth shall increase in clearness, evidence, and influence, till you are removed from this land of shadows to the regions of perfect light, to behold the truth as it shines in the person of Jesus, without a vail, and without a cloud for ever.

SER-

* Prov. iv. 18. † Matth. xiii. 31. 32.

SERMON II.

IN WHAT SENSE THE MYSTERIES OF THE GOSPEL ARE HID FROM MANY.

MATTH. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

WHEN our Lord appeared upon earth, though he came on the most gracious and important business, displayed the perfection of holiness in his conduct, and performed innumerable acts of kindness and love, he met with little regard. He found many enemies, but few hearty friends. Especially those who were most eminent for riches, learning, power, or reputed goodness, disdained him; and most of those who followed him were either people in low circumstances, or whose character had been offensive. Publicans and sinners, fishermen, unlearned and obscure persons, were almost the only friends he had. The Lord Jesus, who was infinitely above the selfish views which are too apt to influence our little minds, was well satisfied with this event. He did not desire honour from men. "The souls of the poor were precious in his "sight *." He spoke kindly to those whom men abhorred; and if he mourned over the obstinacy of the chiefs of the people, it was for their own sakes. Yet (as I observed formerly) when he considered the appointment and will of God in this

 dispensation,

* Psal. lxxii. 13. 14.

dispensation, he was not only content, but he rejoiced. He expressed his approbation in these words: "I thank thee, O Father," &c. There is something observable in this passage which will be of continual use and application, so long as the gospel shall be preached. For as it was then, so it is still; the things that are hid from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes. Five particulars offer from the words for our consideration.

1. What may be intended by *these things?*
2. Where and in what sense they are hid?
3. From whom? *The wise and prudent.*
4. How the knowledge of them is to be obtained? By revelation: *Thou hast revealed.*
5. Who are thus favoured? *Babes.*

I. By the things which it pleases God should be hid from the wise, and revealed to babes, we may understand,

1. In general, the things pertaining to salvation. That most men are ignorant of them, and careless about them, is too plain. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the tree is known by its fruits. Men speak as though their tongues were their own; they act as though they were to give no account; they live as though they were to live here for ever. The way of truth is hid from their eyes, and the fear of God has no place in their hearts.

2. More particularly, those doctrines which are in an especial sense peculiar to the gospel, seem here to be intended. If the principles of what some call Natural Religion, though agreeable to the light of natural conscience, are little regarded; the more spiritual truths of the Bible are not only neglected, but scorned and opposed. The same spirit which shewed itself under our Lord's personal ministry still subsists. The chief doctrines he taught, and for

for which he met with the fierceſt oppoſition, were preciſely the ſame with thoſe which have awakened the ſcorn and rage of the world ever ſince; and which multitudes who bear the name of Chriſtians in this day oppoſe with all their ſtrength. Such as,

1*st*, The divinity of Chriſt. When he ſpoke of himſelf as exiſting before Abraham, and ſaid that God was his *own* father (*a*), the Jews took up ſtones to ſtone him. And this myſtery is ſtill hid from the natural man. No one can ſay, acknowledge, and believe that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord or Jehovah; that he who once hung upon the croſs, bleeding to death, is God the maker of all things, the rightful object of the ſupreme love, truſt, and homage of men and angels, but by the Holy Ghoſt *.

2*dly*, Diſtinguiſhing grace. "When Jeſus firſt "preached at Nazareth, the eyes of all were fixed "upon him †;" but when making application to themſelves, he touched upon this point, from the examples of Naaman the Syrian, and the widow of Sarepta, who were releaſed when many lepers and widows in Israel were paſſed by; they were filled with indignation, and would have thrown him headlong down the rock. And it is to this hour an offenſive doctrine to all who do not know the value and the need of it.

3*dly*,

(*a*) John, v. 18. Πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγε. He ſaid that God was his *own* father, in a ſenſe peculiar to himſelf, and excluſive of all others. The Jews well underſtood the meaning of this aſſertion, that thereby *he made himſelf equal with God*; and therefore, as they did not believe in him, they charged him with blaſphemy. It would indeed have been blaſphemy in a mere man, or in the higheſt archangel, to have ſpoken of himſelf in theſe terms. But the force of the expreſſion is loſt in our verſion of the New Teſtament, through the omiſſion of the word *own*, which ſeems one of the moſt important miſtakes to be found in that tranſlation.

* 1 Cor. xii 3. † Luke, iv. 16, 20.

3*dly*, The new birth. When this was propoſed to a maſter in Iſrael, he cried out, "How can theſe "things be *?" And by many who are wiſe and prudent in their own ſight, it is at this day accounted nonſenſe. A ſmall acquaintance with the general ſtrain of what is publiſhed either from the pulpit or the preſs, may prove that modern divinity has for the moſt part found a ſmoother path to tread, than that by which Nicodemus was conducted to the knowledge of himſelf and his Saviour. Such a doubtful inquirer might now be entertained with many ingenious eſſays on the beauty of virtue, the efficacy of benevolence, the excellency of the human mind, and other favourite topics. He would find teachers enough to encourage and improve the idea he has of his own importance, but he would hardly meet with many who would ſpeak to him in our Lord's language, and refer him to the brazen ſerpent, and a new birth, in order to learn the means and the nature of the goſpel-ſalvation.

4*thly*, The nature of the life of faith. When our Lord ſpoke of this, under the metaphor of eating his fleſh and drinking his blood, many who till then had profeſſed themſelves his diſciples, "turned "back, and walked no more with him †." And none can bear it now who are not taught of God, to ſee ſuch an excellency and ſufficiency in Jeſus, and ſuch emptineſs in themſelves, as conſtrains them to cry out with Peter, "Lord, to whom ſhall "we go ‡?" Theſe things are hid from the wiſe and prudent. But,

II. WHERE, and in what ſenſe, are theſe things hid?

1. Where are they hid?

1*ſt*,

* John, iii. 9. † John, vi. 66. ‡ John, vi. 68.

1*st*, They are hid in Christ. "In him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge *." He is the great repository of truth. "It pleased "the Father that in him should all fulness "dwell †." And he is the messenger by whom the will of God is made known to man ‡. From hence observe,

(1) You can attain to no saving truth, but in and by the knowledge of Jesus Christ. If they are hid in him, it can be but lost labour to seek them elsewhere.

(2) Whatever seeming knowledge you have, if it does not endear him to you, it is nothing worth. It is science falsely so called, and can do you no good: for in the knowledge of him, and of him alone, is eternal life ||.

2*dly*, They are hid in the word of God.

(1) They are contained there: "The whole "scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is "able to make us wise unto salvation **:" to furnish us with a sufficiency of knowledge and motives for every good work. The word of God is perfect.

(2) Yet though contained there, they are not plain to every eye. Though they are *revealed* in the latter, they are still hid from the wise and prudent. Something more is necessary than barely to read in order to understand them; otherwise all who can read, and have the Bible, would be equally enlightened with equal application. But experience shews it far otherwise. This leads me farther to inquire,

2. In what sense they are hid?

1*st*, They are not hid as if it were on purpose that those who sincerely seek them should be disappointed

* Col. ii. 3. † Col. i. 19. ‡ Luke, ix. 35. John, i. 18.
|| John, xvii. 3. ** 2 Tim. iii. 16.

appointed in their ſearch. Far be it from us to think ſo hardly of the Lord. We have expreſs promiſes to the contrary, that all who earneſtly ſeek ſhall find. Fear not, you that ſincerely deſire an experimental and practical knowledge of the truths of God, and are willing to be taught in his appointed way: though many things appear difficult to you at preſent, the Lord will gradually increaſe your light, and crown your endeavours with ſucceſs.

2*dly*, But from ſome perſons they are hid, even from the wiſe and prudent, whom we are to ſpeak of hereafter. Suffer me to offer a familiar illuſtration of the Lord's wiſdom and juſtice in this procedure. Let me ſuppoſe a perſon to have a curious cabinet, which is opened at his pleaſure, and not expoſed to common view: he invites all to come to ſee it, and offers to ſhow it to any one who aſks him. It is hid, beauſe he keeps the key; but none can complain, becauſe he is ready to open it whenever he is deſired. Some perhaps diſdain the offer, and ſay, Why is it locked at all? Some think it not worth ſeeing, or amuſe themſelves with gueſſing at the contents. But thoſe who are ſimply deſirous for themſelves, leave others diſputing, go according to appointment, and are gratified. Theſe have reaſon to be thankful for the favour; and the others have no juſt cauſe to find fault. Thus the riches of divine grace may be compared to a richly-furniſhed cabinet, to which Chriſt is the door. The word of God likewiſe is a cabinet generally locked up; but the key of prayer will open it. The Lord invites all; but he keeps the diſpenſation in his own hand. They cannot ſee theſe things, except he ſhews them; but then he refuſes none that ſincerely aſk him. The wiſe men of the world can go no farther than the outſide of this cabinet; they may amuſe themſelves and ſurpriſe others with their

their ingenious gueſſes at what is within: but a babe that has ſeen it opened, can give us more ſatisfaction without ſtudying or gueſſing at all. If men will preſume to aim at the knowledge of God, without the knowledge of Chriſt, who is the way and the door; if they have ſuch a high opinion of their own wiſdom and penetration, as to ſuppoſe they can underſtand the ſcriptures without the aſſiſtance of his Spirit; or if their worldly wiſdom teaches them, that theſe things are not worth their inquiry; what wonder is it that they ſhould continue to be hid from their eyes? They will one day be ſtript of all their falſe pleas, and condemned out of their own mouths.

3*dly*, The expreſſion, "Thou haſt hid," may perhaps farther imply, that thoſe who ſeek occaſion to cavil ſhall meet with ſomething to confirm their prejudices. When people examine the doctrines or profeſſion of the goſpel, not with a candid deſire to learn, imitate, and practiſe, but in order to find ſome plauſible ground for miſrepreſentation, they frequently have their wiſh. The wiſdom of God has appointed, that difficulties, offences, objections, and ſtumbling-blocks, ſhould attend, to exerciſe and manifeſt the ſpirits of theſe wiſe ones. How largely do they expatiate on the diviſions and difference of ſentiments which too much prevail among thoſe who are united in the ſame leading truths! If they can diſcover an inſtance of error, folly, or wickedneſs, of a ſingle perſon who profeſſes to adhere to the goſpel-doctrine, how do they rejoice as if they had found great ſpoil, charge the faults of a few indiſcriminately upon the whole, and labour to ſhew, that every miſtake and inadvertence is a neceſſary conſequence of the principles which thoſe maintain who commit it. We do not plead for miſtakes and errors of any ſort, for weakneſs in judgement,

or

or inconsistence in practice. But as these things are more or less inseparable from the present state of human nature, they necessarily increase and strengthen the prepossession of scorners against the truth, and are so far a means of hiding it from their eyes. Yet here again the fault is wholly in themselves; for they seek and desire such occasions of stumbling, and would be disappointed and grieved if they could not meet with them. But those who are babes in their own eyes, humble, sincere, and teachable, are brought safe through, by a simple dependant spirit, and are made wiser every day by their observation of what passes around them.

Many inferences and advices might be deduced from what has been said. I shall content myself with three.

1. Examine yourselves what understanding and experience you have of the things I mentioned under the first head. So much as you know of these, so far you are Christians, and no farther. "A form "of godliness, without the power *," is one of the worst characters of the worst times; yet how common in the present day! How many who chuse to be called Christians, reject the testimony which God has given of his Son, deny the efficacy of his grace, speak of the new birth with disdain, as unintelligible and unnecessary, and account all that can be said of the life of faith (though founded upon express scripture, and attested by many witnesses) no better than enthusiastic jargon! But if you are thus minded, however sober your deportment, or professedly benevolent your disposition, though you may be applauded as a pattern of generosity, a philosopher,

* 2 Tim. iii. 5.

losopher, or a saint, by your acquaintance and neighbours, if the scriptures are true, you can be but as a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal in the sight of God. You would have despised Thomas in your heart, if you had been witness to his joyful exclamation when he worshipped Jesus, and cried, "My Lord, and my God*!" You would have despised Paul as a dark enthusiast, had you heard him say, "The life which I now live in "the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who "loved me, and gave himself for me†." Yea, you must have despised Jesus himself, if you had been present at his conference with Nicodemus. Our Lord Jesus is now in heaven, Thomas and Paul have been long dead; you cannot reach them: nor do they stand in your way; therefore, perhaps you are content to speak well of them in general terms. But those who come nearest to their language and spirit are the objects of your scorn and hatred. How then can you pretend to love him, or presume that he loves you? Jesus is worshipped in heaven; how then can you expect to come there? or what pleasure could you find there in your present turn of mind? "O kiss the Son, lest he be "angry, and you perish; for in a little time his "wrath will burn like fire."

But to every one who understands, embraces, and lives under the influence of these truths, I may safely apply our Lord's words, "Blessed art "thou‡," however despised by men, or chastened of the Lord; for "flesh and blood hath not re-"vealed these things to thee;" thou hast assuredly received them from God by his Spirit. He alone is able to cause the light to shine into our dark hearts,

"to

* John, xx. 28.
† Gal. ii. 20.
‡ Matth. xvi. 17.

" to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in " the face of Jesus Christ *."

2. Do not entertain hard and perplexing thoughts about the counsels of God, either respecting others or yourselves.

1*st*, With regard to others. It is a frequent difficulty, either thrown in the way of inquirers after truth by the subtlety of Satan, or perhaps arising from the natural pride of the human heart, that would be thought able to account for every thing. I say, when they begin to apprehend the gospel-way of salvation, this perplexing question arises, If things are so, what will become of multitudes? What! are all the Heathens, Mahometans, Papists, and even all the Protestants, except the few who adopt these singular sentiments, to be lost? I shall not attempt to conquer this objection by dint of reasoning, but would rather persuade you to direct your reasonings another way. When the same question for substance was proposed to our Lord, his answer to those who asked him was, " Strive (each one for yourselves) to enter in at " the strait gate †." Take care of yourselves, and leave the cases of others to the Lord. Remember he is God, and therefore just and good.

2*dly*, With regard to yourselves. Secret things belong to God; your business is with what is revealed. Some put the word of salvation from them perversely, and think, if the Lord designs me for eternal life, he will call me in his own time; till then I will go on in my sins. Those who can reason thus, and take encouragement to persist in wickedness, from the consideration of the power and efficacy of God's grace, do thereby avow themselves to be Satan's willing servants. But he terrifies many on whom he cannot thus prevail, with representing

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Luke, xiii. 23. 24.

presenting to them, that, let them do what they will, it is all in vain; unless the Lord has chosen them, notwithstanding any good beginnings they may hope he has wrought in them, they will come to nothing at last. It is your business to give all diligence to make your calling sure. If, by a humble waiting upon God, you are enabled to have your conversation according to the gospel, listen not to vain and perplexing reasonings, but commit yourself to the mercy and guidance of the Lord; and he, in his good time, will enable you to see, and to say, that it is not in vain to trust in him. Your path shall be like the advancing light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The Lord has already provided all that you can reasonably desire.

(1) The means are pointed out, in the use of which you are to be found, and wherein you may expect his blessing. These are chiefly secret prayer, the study of his written word, an attendance on the preached gospel, and free converse (as proper opportunities are afforded) with his believing people. If you continue in the observance of these, and act faithfully to the light you have already received, by breaking off from the evil practices of the world, and watching against those things which you yourself know to be evil, you will certainly gain ground in light, strength, and comfort. You will see more and more of the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel; and in proportion to your views, you shall be "changed into the same image from glory "to glory." For,

(2) The promise is sure. What God has said you may assuredly depend on. And what has he said? What indeed has he not said for the encouragement of those who are sincerely desirous to seek and serve him? "They that seek shall find. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their "strength.

" ſtrength. I will pour water upon him that is " thirſty, and floods upon the dry ground. He " giveth power to the weak; and to them that " have no might, he increaſeth ſtrength *."

If, therefore, you feel yourſelf a loſt ſinner, ſee a beauty and ſufficiency in Jeſus, have a hunger and thirſt after his righteouſneſs, and are made willing to expect the bleſſing in his way; you may look upon this as a token for good. Such views and deſires as theſe never are found in any heart till he communicates them. By nature we are averſe and contrary to them. Give him the glory of what he has begun; and oppoſe your temptations, fears, and doubts, with this argument, drawn from your own experience, as the wife of Manoah formerly reaſoned: " If the Lord had been pleaſed " to kill us, he would not have enabled and en- " couraged us to call upon him; neither would he " at this time have ſhewn us ſuch things as theſe †."

* Matth. vii. 7. 8. Iſ. xl. 29. 31. Iſ. xliv. 3.
† Judges, xiii. 23.

F. R.

SERMON III.

THE CHARACTERS OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL-DOCTRINES ARE HID.

MATTH. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

THE judgements of God are a great deep. He does not give us a full account of his matters; much less can *we* by searching find out *him* to perfection; yet if we carefully attend to what he has revealed, and apply his written word with humility and caution to what passes in ourselves, and around us, we may by his grace attain to some considerable satisfaction in things which at first view seem hard to be understood. The subject of my text is of this nature. That God should hide things of everlasting consequence from any persons, sounds very harsh; but I hope, when the words are explained, we shall see, that though he acts as a sovereign in his dispensations, his ways are just, and good, and equal.

We have already made an entrance upon this attempt. Besides some general observations in my first discourse, I endeavoured to shew you, in the second, 1. What the things are to which our Lord refers; 2. When, and in what sense they are hid. I proceed now to consider,

III. FROM whom they are hid,—*the wise and prudent*. It will, I think, be readily supposed, that the

the expreſſion does not mean thoſe who are truly ſo, and in God's account. He eſteems none to be wiſe and prudent but thoſe who are enlightened with his ſpiritual wiſdom, who now ſerve and love him in Chriſt. "The fear of the Lord is the be-"ginning (or, as the word likewiſe ſignifies, the "head or principal part) of wiſdom *;" and from ſuch as theſe he hides or keeps back nothing that is profitable for them: on the contrary, that promiſe is ſure, "The ſecret of the Lord is with them "that fear him; and he will ſhew them his cove-"nant †." When our Lord ſaid, "The children "of this world are wiſer in their generation than "the children of light ‡," he did not mean they were ſo abſolutely, for their boaſted wiſdom is the mereſt folly, but only that they acted conſiſtently with their own principles. The wiſe and prudent here are either thoſe who are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight, or thoſe who are generally ſo reputed by the bulk of mankind. And theſe two amount to the ſame: for as the natural wiſdom of man ſprings from the ſame fountain, *ſelf*, and is confined to the ſame bounds, *the things of time and ſenſe*, in all alike, (though there is variety of purſuits within theſe limits, as tempers and ſituations differ), men are generally prone to approve and applaud thoſe who act upon their own principles.

We may take notice, then, (as a key to this inquiry), that what is accounted wiſdom by the world, is not only different from the wiſdom of God, but inconſiſtent with it, and oppoſite to it. They differ as fire and water, light and darkneſs; the prevalence of the one neceſſarily includes the ſuppreſſion of the other. See this at large inſiſted on by St Paul, in the beginning of his firſt epiſtle to

* Pſal. cxi. 10. † Pſal. xxv. 14. ‡ Luke, xvi. 8.

to the Corinthians, the first, second, and third chapters.

Who, then, are the wise and prudent intended in my text? May the Holy Spirit enable every conscience to make faithful application of what shall be offered upon this head.

1. In the judgement of the world, those are wise and prudent persons who are very thoughtful and diligent about acquiring wealth, especially if their endeavours are crowned with remarkable success. If a man thrives (as the phrase is) from small beginnings, and joins house to house, and field to field, so that he has land to call after his own name, and large possessions to leave to his children, how is he applauded (though at the same time envied) by the most who know him! I do not deny, that a proper concern and industry in our secular calling is both lawful and our duty; and I allow, that the providence of God does sometimes remarkably prosper those who depend on him in the management of their business; but I make no scruple to affirm, that where this is the main concern, (as some call it), such wisdom is madness. Such persons are no less idolaters than those who worship stocks and stones. And if the things of God are hid from them, it is surely their own fault; they do not even complain of it as a hardship; they have their choice, their reward, and are satisfied. They are told that these things are in Christ, and there they are content that they should remain; they see no beauty nor suitableness in *them*, they have no desire after *him*; he might keep his heaven and his truths to himself, if they could always have their fill of the world. They are told that these things are hid in the scripture, but they have neither leisure nor inclination to search there for them. Their time is taken up with buying and selling, building and planting, &c. O

beware of this wisdom. "What will riches profit "you in the day of wrath *," at death or judgement? If you live and die in this spirit, you will bemoan your choice when it is too late.

2. Those are accounted wise and prudent, who think they have found a way to reconcile God and the world together. If a man should attempt to fly, or to walk upon the water, he would be deemed a fool. How is it that this endeavour, which is equally impossible, (and expressly declared so by our Lord), should be more favourably thought of? The deceitfulness of the heart and the subtlety of Satan concur in this point. You will have a sort of religion, but then you take care not to carry things too far. You are governed by the fear and regard of men. Something you will do to satisfy conscience, but not too much, lest you hurt your interest, disoblige your friends, or draw on yourselves reproach, or a hard name. I must tell you from the word of God, your attempt to halve things is an abomination in his sight. Would it not be treason by the law, to pay the king an outward respect, and yet hold secret correspondence with his enemies? The decisions of the word of God are to the same effect in this instance. "Love "not the world, neither the things that are in the "world. If any man love the world, the love of "the Father is not in him †." "Know you not, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with "God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of "the world, is the enemy of God ‡."

3. A man is deemed wise, who has considerable knowledge and curiosity about natural things, and all those subjects which usually bear the name of *science*: if he can talk of the magnitudes, distances, and motions of the heavenly bodies, can foretell

* Prov. xi. 4. † 1 John, ii. 15. ‡ James, iv. 4.

tell an eclipse, has skill in mathematics, is well read in the history of ancient times, and can inform you what is found in books concerning the folly and wickedness of mankind who lived some thousands of years ago; or if he understands several languages, and can call a thing by twenty different names. It is true, when these attainments are sanctified by grace, they may in some respects have their use. But, in general, the best use a believer will or can make of them, is to lay them down at the foot of the cross. When a man possessed of a great quantity of these pebbles, has his conscience awakened, and his understanding enlightened, he is glad to renounce them all for the pearl of great price, and to adopt the apostle's determination, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified *." This was the effect when the word of God mightily grew and prevailed †. We may at least say, that this kind of wisdom is for the most part dangerous and blinding to the soul.

1*st*, It tends to feed and exalt self, to make a person something in his own eyes. This we are prone enough to by nature. An increase of unsanctified knowledge adds fuel to fire.

2*dly*, It ingrosses the time and thoughts. Our minds are narrow, capable of attending to but few things at once: and our span is short, and will hardly admit of many excursions from the main concern. If we were to live to the age of Methuselah, we might pursue some things which at present are highly improper and impertinent from this consideration alone. A man that is upon an urgent affair of life and death, has no leisure for amusement. Such is our situation. We are creatures of a day. Time is vanishing, and eternity is at stake.

*1 Cor. ii. 2. † Acts, xix. 19.

3*dly*, The deluſion here is ſpecious, and not eaſily diſcovered. A perſon with theſe accompliſhments is not always enſlaved to money, or to ſenſual pleaſures: he therefore pities thoſe who are, and, comparing himſelf with others, ſuppoſes he is well employed, becauſe his favourite ſtudies are a check upon his appetites, and prevents his ſelling himſelf for gold, or running into riot with the thoughtleſs. Yet an attachment of this ſort equally blinds him with reſpect to his true intereſt. Will the knowledge of books, or men, or ſtars, or flowers, purify the conſcience from dead works, to ſerve the living God? It is too plain, that the truths of the goſpel are hid from none more effectually than from many of this character. None caſt a more daring or public ſlight upon the revealed will of God, than ſome who are admired and applauded on account of their knowledge and learning.

4. Your nice and curious reaſoners and diſputers, that will ſee (as they profeſs) the bottom of every thing, and truſt to their own judgement and inquiries, independent of the Spirit of God, are another ſort of wiſe perſons from whom theſe things are often and juſtly hid. And this character may be found in many, both learned and unlearned: for many have good natural faculties, who have not had the advantages of learning and education. But this ſpirit is directly contrary to that ſimplicity, dependence, and obedience of faith, which the ſcripture exhorts us to ſeek after. Its effects are various.

1*ſt*, Some (and thoſe not a few) are led to reject the word of God altogether, becauſe it evidently contains many things above and contrary to their vain imaginations. And herein they contradict the moſt obvious principles of that reaſon which they lay claim to. A revelation from God can only

only be thought neceſſary or probable, but on the ſuppoſition that it is to inform us of ſomething which we could not have known without it. Therefore, to pretend to try the ſcripture-claim to this character, by ſuch *criteria* or marks as we poſſeſs beforehand, is the ſame thing in effect as to determine to reject it without any trial at all.

2*dly*, When the ſcriptures, as to the letter, are acknowledged to be true, perſons of this turn, preſuming themſelves ſufficient judges of the ſenſe, are helped by their ingenuity to explain away all the ſublime doctrines of truth, ſo as to ſuit the prejudices and apprehenſions of their own carnal minds. This, eſpecially when joined with a ſmattering of learning, has been the chief ſource of all the errors and hereſies which have peſtered the church of God in all ages. This is a principal cauſe why the depravity of man by nature, the deity and atonement of Chriſt, the operations of the Holy Spirit, and all the doctrines of grace, have been denied by men wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight, though evidently contained in the book which they profeſs to receive as of divine inſpiration.

3*dly*, Even where the doctrines of grace have been notionally received, the ſame ſpirit of wiſdom can ſtill find occaſion to work. When there is more knowledge in the head than experience in the heart, many and various are the evils that often enſue. Diſputes and hard queſtions are ſtarted, contentions and diviſions multiplied, and people are more eager to perplex others, than to edify themſelves. Thus the name and counſels of God are profaned by an irreverent curioſity, and the clear expreſs declarations of his will darkened by words without knowledge. When this natural wiſdom puts on a ſpiritual appearance, no perſons are more fatally deceived, or more obſtinately harden-

ed. They think they can learn no more, but are wise enough to teach every one: they neglect the use of God's appointed means themselves, and despise them in others: they are proud, censorious, obstinate, and full of conceit. Take care of Satan at all times, but especially when he would transform himself into an angel of light. There is reason to think the things of God are entirely hid, as to their power and excellence, from some who fondly dream that none are acquainted with them but themselves.

THE consideration of this subject may lead to a variety of improvement. It may teach you,

1. What to fear. A worldly spirit. This in a prevailing degree is inconsistent with a work of grace, and in whatever degree it obtains, or is indulged, will proportionably retard and abate the light and comfort of our souls. The cares and pleasures of this life are by our Lord compared to thorns *, unprofitable and painful; they produce no fruit, but they wound and tear. Yea, they are thorns in the eyes †, which will prevent the great things of God from being perceived.

A spirit of self-dependence. "Be not wise in "your own conceits ‡." "If any man think that "he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet "as he ought to know ||." God giveth wisdom to the lowly, but he confounds the devices of the proud. His promises of teaching, leading, and guiding, are made to the meek, the simple, and those who are little in their own eyes.

2. What to pray for. A simple child-like temper. That you may come to the word as to the light, and look beyond yourselves for the assistance of

* Matth. xiii. 22. † Josh. xxiii. 13. ‡ Rom xii. 16.
|| 1 Cor. viii. 2.

of the Holy Spirit, without which your moſt laboured inquiries will only miſlead you farther and farther from the truth.

3. How to examine yourſelves. Not by your notions and attainments in knowledge, for theſe you may have in a conſiderable degree, and be wholly deſtitute of true grace. The word of God ſuppoſes it poſſible that perſons may have great gifts *, flaming zeal, and much ſucceſs, and yet, having no true love to God, be in his ſight no better than ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal. But if you would know your ſtate, examine by your prevailing deſires. Are your notions of grace effectual to lead you in the path of duty? Do you hunger and thirſt for an increaſe of holineſs? Does the knowledge you have of Chriſt lead you to love and truſt him? Are you poor in ſpirit? You know nothing aright if you know not yourſelves.

4. Ye that are believers may ſee cauſe to praiſe the Lord for his diſpenſations towards you.

1*st*, Had you been wiſe in men's eſteem, you might have continued fools to the end of your lives. If the Lord has taught you the ſecret of them that fear him, if he has ſhown you the way of ſalvation, if he has directed your feet in the paths of his commandments, then you have the true wiſdom, which ſhall be your light through life, and in death your glory. Therefore,

2*dly*, Be not grieved that ye are ſtrangers to human wiſdom and glory. Theſe things which others ſo highly prize, you may reſign contentedly, and ſay, "Lord, it is enough if thou art mine." Nay, you have good reaſon to praiſe his wiſdom and goodneſs for preſerving you from thoſe temptations which have enſnared and endangered ſo many.

3*dly*, Do you deſire more of this true wiſdom?

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.—3.

Seek it in the same way in which you have received the first beginnings. Be frequent and earnest in secret prayer. Study the word of God, and study it not to reconcile and make it bend to your sentiments, but to draw all your sentiments from it, to copy it in your heart, and express it in your conduct. Be cautious of paying too great a regard to persons and parties. One is your master, even Christ. Stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free; and while you humbly endeavour to profit by all, do not resign your understanding to any, but to him who is the only wise God, the only effectual and infallible teacher. Compare the experience of what passes within your own breast, with the observations you make of what daily occurs around you, and bring all your remarks and experiences to the touch-stone of God's holy word. Thus shall you grow in knowledge and in grace; and amidst the various discouragements which may arise from remaining ignorance in yourselves or others, take comfort in reflecting, that you are drawing near to the land of light, where there will be no darkness at all. Then you shall know as you are known; your love and your joy shall likewise be perfect, and you shall be satisfied with the rivers of pleasure which are before the throne of God, world without end.

SER-

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL REVELATION, AND WHO ARE FAVOURED WITH IT.

MATTH. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

WE proceed now to the more pleasing part of our subject. The great things of the gospel, though hid, are not lost: not hid as in the bottom of the sea; but he who hides them from the wise and prudent, is ready and willing to make them known to every sincere inquirer. This discovery, on the Lord's part, is a revelation, and the character of those who obtain it is expressed by the word *babes*. Of the five particulars I proposed to consider from the text, these two yet remain to be spoken to.

IV. THE saving knowledge of divine truth is a revelation. Our Lord uses a parallel expression, when he commends Peter's confession of his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and "blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my "Father which is in heaven *." Peter had Moses and the prophets, so had the scribes and the Pharisees; and after their manner they were diligent in reading and searching them. But that he could acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, when they rejected him, was because the Father had revealed his

* Matth. xvi. 17.

his truth to him, and given him a clearer knowledge of it than he could have received from the written word alone. But it may be proper to inquire into the meaning of this term, What are we here to understand by revelation?

Sometimes revelation is used in an extraordinary sense, as when of old the Lord made known to his servants, the prophets, those doctrines and events which till then were neither heard nor thought of. Of this we are not now to speak, but of that which is common to all believers, and necessary to salvation.

Now this revelation supposes the things to be revealed were real and certain before, but unknown, and not to be found out any other way.

Revelation is not the creation or invention of something new, but the manifestation of what was till then unknown. The great things of eternity, the glorious truths of the gospel, are real and certain in themselves already, and do not begin to be when we begin to be acquainted with them: yet till God is pleased to reveal them to the heart, we have no more spiritual and effective knowledge of them than if they were not. Ignorance of things very near to us, and in which we are nearly concerned, may be from two causes.

1. From a want of light. Nothing can be perceived in the dark. If you are in a dark room, though it is richly adorned and furnished, all is lost to you. If you stand in a dark night upon the top of a hill that commands a fine prospect, still you are able to see no more than if you was in a valley. Though you were in a dangerous place with pitfalls and precipices, and thieves and murderers all around you, still you might imagine yourself in safety, if you had no light with you.

2. It may be from some hindrance or obstruction between

between you and the object. Thus your dearest friend, or greatest enemy, might be within a few yards of you, and you know nothing of it, if there was a wall between you.

These comparisons may in some measure represent our case by nature. God is near; "in him "we live, move, and have our being." Eternity is near; we stand upon the brink of it. Death is near, advancing towards us with hasty strides. The truths of God's word are most certain in themselves, and of the utmost consequence to us. But we perceive none of these things; we are not affected by them, because our understandings are dark, and because thick walls of ignorance, prejudice, and unbelief, stand before the eyes of the mind, and keep them from our view. Even those notions of truth which we sometimes pick up by hearing and reading, are but like windows in a dark room; they are suited to afford an entrance to the light when it comes, but can give no light of themselves.

I think, therefore, we may conclude, that God's revealing these things to us only signifies his effecting such a change in us by his Holy Spirit, as disposes and enables us to behold them. He sends a divine light into the soul; and things begin to appear so plain, we wonder at our former stupidity that we could not perceive them before. By the power of his Spirit, he breaks down the walls which prevented and confined our views; and a new unthought-of prospect suddenly appears before us. Then the soul sees its danger: "I "thought myself secure; but I find I am in the "midst of enemies. Guilt pursues me behind; "fear, and the snare, and the pit, are before me; "which way shall I turn?" Then it perceives its mistake: "While my views were confined, I "thought there was nothing but the span of life

" to take care of; but now I see a boundless eter-
" nity beyond it." It obtains a glimpse likewise of the glories of the better world, of the beauties of holiness, of the excellency of Jesus. This light is at first faint and imperfect, but grows stronger by the use of appointed means; and as it is increased, every thing appears with a stronger evidence.

We may more particularly illustrate this work of the Holy Spirit, as it influences those leading faculties of the soul, the understanding, affections, and will. By nature the will is perverse and rebellious, and the affections alienated from God: the primary cause of these disorders lies in the darkness of the understanding. Here then the change begins. The Spirit of God enlightens the understanding, by which the sinner perceives things to be as they are represented in the word of God; that he is a transgressor against the divine law, and on this account obnoxious to wrath; that he is not only guilty, but depraved and unclean, and utterly unable, either to repair past evil, or to amend his own heart and life. He sees that the great God might justly refuse him mercy; and that he has no plea to offer in arrest of judgement. This discovery would sink him into despair, if it went no farther; but by the same light which discovers him to himself, he begins to see a suitableness, wisdom, and glory, in the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. He reads and hears concerning the person, sufferings, and offices of Christ, in a very different manner to what he did before; and as, by attending to the word and ministry, his apprehensions of Jesus and his understanding become more clear and distinct, a spiritual hope takes place, and increases, in his soul; and the sure effects of this is, he feels his love drawn forth to him, who so loved him as to die for his sins. Beholding, by faith, the Lord Jesus

Jesus Christ, as bleeding and dying upon the cross; and knowing for whom, and on what account, he suffered, he learns to hate, with a bitter hatred, those sins which nailed him there. The amazing love of Christ constrains him to account all things which he formerly valued, as dross and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of his Saviour. Nor does his faith stop here; he views him who once suffered and died, rising triumphant from the tomb, and ascending into heaven in the character of the Representative, Friend, and Fore-runner of his people. Having such a High-Priest, he is encouraged to draw near to God, to claim an interest in the promises, respecting the life that now is, and that which is to come. Thus possessing, in the beginnings of grace, an earnest of the glory that shall be revealed, a real, universal, abiding change necessarily takes place in the affections. Now old things are passed away, and all things become new: the soul no longer cleaves willingly to the dust, or can be satisfied with earthly things, but thirsts for communion with God, and an increase of holiness. Sin is no longer consented to, or delighted in, but is opposed and watched against; and every unallowed deviation from the will of God excites the sincerest grief and humiliation, and leads to renewed application to the blood and grace of Jesus for pardon and strength. Thus the will likewise is brought into an unreserved subjection and surrender to the power of Christ, and acts as freely in his service as it once did against him. For that what is termed *the freedom of the human will* should consist in a suspended indifference between good and evil, is a refinement, which, however admired and applauded by many, is equally contrary both to sound reasoning and to universal experience. The will, in all persons and cases,

caſes, is determined by the preſent dictates of the underſtanding, and the bent of the affections.

By aſcribing ſo much to the Spirit of God, I do not mean, as you may perceive by what I have juſt now ſaid, to ſeclude his holy word, or preached goſpel. All theſe truths and proſpects are already contained in the word of God; but without the light of the Spirit they are not diſcerned. They are propounded to you in the public miniſtry. We teſtify again and again the things which we have ſeen and heard of the word of life; and when we are in ſome meaſure affected with their evidence, we are ready to wonder how any of you can poſſibly avoid perceiving them; till we remember how it was with ourſelves, and then we know, by our own experience, that *we* muſt preach, and *you* hear in vain, unleſs the Lord is pleaſed to open your hearts. But obſerve,

1. The Spirit of God teaches and enlightens by his word as the inſtrument. There is no revelation from him, but what is (as to our perception of it) derived from the ſcripture. There may be ſuppoſed illuminations and ſtrong impreſſions upon the mind, in which the word of God has no place or concern; but this alone is ſufficient to diſcountenance them, and to prove that they are not from the Holy Spirit. For,

2. The ſcripture is the appointed rule and teſt, by which all our ſearches and diſcoveries, all our acquiſitions in religious knowledge, muſt be tried. If they are indeed from God, they will ſtand this trial, and anſwer to the word as face anſwers to face in a glaſs, but not otherwiſe *. "To the "law and to the teſtimony; if they ſpeak not ac- "cording to this word, it is becauſe there is no "light in them." If thoſe who diſpute all claims to

* Iſa. viii. 20.

to the influence of the Spirit of God, as enthusiasm, had not been frequently informed, that we expect, we acknowledge, no internal revelation, but by the medium of the word of God, and agreeable to it, they would be less inexcuseable in repeating the charges of folly and infatuation, which they ignorantly fix upon the work of the Spirit, and all who profess a dependence on it. To those who are indeed candid and sincere inquirers after truth, what has been said upon this part of our subject, will, I hope, suggest the propriety of two directions. From hence learn,

1. To set a high value upon the word of God. All that is necessary to make you wise to salvation is there, and there only. In this precious book you may find a direction for every doubt, a solution of every difficulty, a promise suited to every circumstance you can be in. There you may be informed of your disease by sin, and the remedy provided by grace. You may be instructed to know yourselves, to know God and Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of whom standeth eternal life. The wonders of redeeming love, the glories of the Redeemer's person, the happiness of the redeemed people, the power of faith, and the beauty of holiness, are here represented to the life. Nothing is wanting to make life useful and comfortable, death safe and desirable, and to bring down something of heaven upon earth. But this true wisdom can be found no where else. If you wander from the scripture, in pursuit either of present peace, or future hope, your search will end in disappointment. This is the fountain of living waters: if you forsake it, and give the preference to broken cisterns of your own devising, they will fail you when you most need them. Rejoice, therefore, that such a treasure is put into your hand; but rejoice with trembling. Remember this is not all you want; unless God likewise

likewise gives you a heart to use it right, your privilege will only aggravate your guilt and misery. Therefore remember,

2. The necessity of prayer. For though the things of nearest consequence to you are in the Bible, and you should read it over and over, till you commit the whole book to your memory; yet you will not understand, or discern the truth as it is in Jesus, unless the Lord the Spirit shews it to you. The dispensation of the truth is in his hand; and without him all the fancied advantages of superior capacity, learning, criticism, and books, will prove as useless as spectacles to the blind. The great encouragement is, that this infallible Spirit, so necessary to guide us into the way of peace, is promised to all who sincerely ask it. This Spirit Jesus is exalted to bestow; and he has said, "Whosoever "cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Therefore water your reading with frequent prayer.—— We proceed to,

V. The characters of those persons who succeed in their inquiries, and have the things of God savingly revealed to them; they are called *babes.*

1. They are for the most part babes in the world's esteem. They are despised by the wise and prudent for their weak capacities, small attainments, and their seeming insignificance in common life. But the Lord does not overlook any on these accounts. He is no respecter of persons. In the blessings of his common providence, those which are more immediately from his own hand, such as air and light, health and strength, the faculties of sight and hearing, &c. he bestows as freely, and in as great perfection, to the poor as to the rich, to the ignorant as to the learned. And thus it is with respect to his grace. Our incapacity is found-

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ed in our nature, and is common to all, and not in any particular circumſtances. He is as ready to ſave the mean as the noble. Many of the great and wiſe are offended at this. As they ingroſs the earth, they would willingly ingroſs heaven alſo to themſelves. But the Lord has appointed otherwiſe; and it has been one reproach conſtantly attending the goſpel, that few but the common people * have thought it worth their notice.

2. They are babes in their own eſteem. Not that ſome are more humble than others by nature, and therefore the Lord gives them a preference on that account; by nature we are all alike, equally deſtitute of the ſmalleſt good: but the expreſſion teaches us, that thoſe to whom the Lord is pleaſed to reveal theſe things, he firſt empties and humbles, ſtrips them of all ground of boaſting, and brings them to a dependence on himſelf. The true believer is frequently compared to a little child; and it is eaſy to trace an inſtructive reſemblance.

1*ſt*, A child or babe has little knowledge, and its capacity and powers are as yet very feeble. All whoſe underſtandings have been ſpiritually enlightened, will acknowledge themſelves children in this reſpect. The little they know convinces them of their ignorance. They are convinced that their views of things are faint, partial, confuſed; that their judgements are weak; that if the Lord prevents it not, they are very liable to be impoſed on by the ſubtlety of Satan, and the treachery of their own hearts. They feel that they have not in themſelves ſufficiency to think a good thought.

2*dly*, A child is teachable. Conſcious of their own ignorance, they liſten to all about them, and think every one is qualified to teach them ſomething. Among men none are truly teachable, but thoſe

* Mark, xii 37. John, vii. 48. 49.

thoſe who know they need to be taught. The natural man, if poſſeſſed of any advantages, thinks every one needs his help. The humble Chriſtian gives this proof, that the confeſſion he is ready to make of his ignorance is genuine, and from his heart, that he is deſirous to learn from all. He is ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, and open to conviction. Though he will not aſſent to every thing he hears without proof or examination, yet he is diſpoſed to receive inſtruction, and thankful to thoſe by whom he is profited. He is fearful of being miſtaken, of giving way to prejudices, and therefore gladly improves every means of information.

3*dly*, A child is ſimple and dependent. He does not reaſon, but implicitly receives what he is told by his parents, or thoſe whom he thinks wiſer than himſelf. Such a reſignation, indeed, the believer dares not make of his underſtanding to any men, however highly he may eſteem them in the main; for he has learned from the word of God, not to put his truſt in man; but this is the deſire of the renewed heart, with reſpect to the teaching of God's word and Spirit. He allows no reaſoning or queſtioning here; nor will he ſay with Nicodemus, "How can theſe things be?" It is enough for him that God has ſaid it, and is able to make it good. This is a happy temper. In this way innumerable difficulties that ariſe from appearances and ſophiſms are avoided; and the mind, by faith, ſteers in ſafety acroſs the immenſe ocean of conjectures and opinions, which diſputants and reaſoners, eſſaying to do, are ſunk and overpowered. It is true, there are various degrees of this ſimplicity; and in thoſe who poſſeſs it in a larger meaſure, there is a remaining principle of pride and unbelief, which coſts them much prayer and many conflicts to ſubdue. But this, in ſome degree, is eſſential to the character of thoſe who are taught of God; they deſire

ſire and endeavour to ſubmit wholly to his guidance and will in all things.

Here, then, is a proper topic for ſelf-examination. Let each one aſk his heart, Have I this ſimple child-like diſpoſition?

If you have, if it is the deſire of your ſoul to be taught of God, if his word is your rule, if you depend on his Spirit to teach you all things, and to lead you as it were by the hand, ſenſible that unleſs you are thus led and guided, you ſhall certainly go aſtray; be thankful for this, accept it as a token for good. You was not always ſo: there was a time when you was wiſe in your own eyes, and prudent in your own ſight. You have good warrant to hope that the Lord, who has already taught you to depend on himſelf, will ſhew you all that is neceſſary for you to know.

But if this is not the caſe, if you lean to your own underſtanding, what wonder is it that you are ſtill walking in darkneſs and uncertainty? Will you ſay, I have read the Bible diligently; I have taken no ſmall pains to examine things, to ſee which of the many diviſions that obtain among Chriſtians is poſſeſſed of the truth; but I am ſtill at a loſs. Surely, if the tenets ſome plead for had been in the ſcripture, I ſhould have found them there! I anſwer, without detracting from your ſagacity or your ſincerity, your caſe is eaſily accounted for from the verſe we are upon, if your inquiries are not conducted in a humble dependence upon the Spirit of God. Too many inſtances we could produce of men, who having laboured for years in what ſeems one of the moſt laudable undertakings, the explaining the ſcriptures for the uſe of others, have at laſt been in a remarkable degree unſettled themſelves; and the only viſible fruits their reading and induſtry have afforded, have been error, invective, and diſſatisfaction; ſo that their labours have been an exemplification

plification of the former part of our text, a proof in point how entirely the things of God are often hid from the wise and prudent.

You that are seeking the Lord, and are little in your own eyes, rejoice that the dispensation of grace is in his hands. If men had the disposal of it, you might perhaps have been overlooked. We should have been ready to have accepted the fair-spoken young man, who accosted our Lord with so much outward respect, and had so much to say in his own behalf *: and probably we should have left the thief upon the cross to perish like a wretch, as he deserved. "But the Lord seeth not as man seeth †." "His ways are higher than our ways, and his "thoughts than our thoughts ‡" Therefore there is encouragement for the meanest and the vilest. He has excluded none but those who exclude themselves. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold "now is the day of salvation. Let the wicked "forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his "thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for "he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, "for he will abundantly pardon."

* Mark, x. 20. ‡ 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Isa. lv. 7. 9.

SER-

SERMON V.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE ASSERTED AND ILLUSTRATED.

MATTH. xi. 26.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

THAT the doctrine in the preceding verse is true in fact, is sufficiently evident from common observation. The greatest part of those whom the world esteems wise and prudent, and all to a man who think themselves so, pay but small regard to the truths of the gospel. They are hid from their eyes, and revealed to babes, to those whom they despise on account of their ignorance and insignificance. And if a few who are favoured with considerable advantages in point of genius, education, or rank, do receive the truth in the love of it, they have been at least taught that they are no better than babes, and are glad to count all outward things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

If we could give no other reason for this dispensation of grace, than that which is assigned in our text, it ought to be satisfactory; and would be so, if it was not for the pride of our hearts. Surely that which seems good in the sight of God, must be holy, and wise, and good in itself. How vain and presumptuous is blinded man, who would dare to reply against his Maker, to charge his holiness with injustice, his wisdom with mistake, his goodness with partiality! All their vain cavils will be silenced at the great day, when the secrets of all hearts are opened, and God will be justified when he condemns.

demns. However, though we dare not venture too far into the depths of the divine counſels, yet, from the light he has afforded us in his word, we may, in our feeble manner, aſſert and prove that his ways are juſt and equal: and, beſides the argument of his ſovereignty, "That ſo it has pleaſed him," he has been pleaſed to favour us with ſome of the reaſons "why it has ſo pleaſed him." And this is the ſubject I propoſe to lead your meditations to from theſe words. May his Spirit aſſiſt me, that I may not darken counſel by words without knowledge.

Let us begin with inquiring, What might be his principal ends in ſending his Son into the world, that we might have life through him?—Theſe I apprehend were chiefly two.

1. The redemption and complete ſalvation of all that believe. All mankind are by nature in the ſame ſtate of ſin and miſery. But we are told, that at the great day there will be an unſpeakable difference in the circumſtances between ſome and others. Many will then ſtand trembling at his left hand, to whom the King ſhall ſay, "Depart." But thoſe on the right hand will hear thoſe joyful words, "Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit "the kingdom prepared for you from the founda-"tion of the world." If you aſk, To what is this difference primarily owing? the anſwer is provided: "Jeſus loved them, and waſhed them from "their ſins in his own blood; he redeemed them, "out of every nation, and people, and language; "they came out of great tribulation, and waſhed "their robes, and made them white in the blood "of the Lamb; therefore are they before the "throne." It was then for their ſakes, who ſhould be hereafter found at the right hand of God, that "God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made "under the law, to redeem them that were under

"the

" the law, that we might receive the adoption of " ſons."

2. But beſides this, God had another and a ſtill higher end in the work of redemption, namely, the manifeſtation of his own glory. It was unſpeakable love to us that he provided the means of ſalvation at all; and we cannot wonder, much leſs ought we to complain, that in juſtice to himſelf he appointed ſuch means, and ſuch a way, as that all the praiſe and glory of the contrivance ſhould in the end redound to himſelf alone. In order to this, it was neceſſary that the following things ſhould be manifeſted with the fulleſt evidence.

1. The greatneſs of man's depravity, guilt, and miſery: That it was not a ſmall thing, but a caſe worthy the interpoſition of almighty power and infinite grace.

2. The utter inſufficiency of man to relieve himſelf; that ſo God might have the whole honour of his recovery, and we might be for ever debtors to his free undeſerved mercy.

3. That whereas there are, to outward appearance, a great variety of characters among mankind, it was neceſſary the diſpenſation of his grace ſhould be ſo conducted as to ſhew, that no caſe was too hard for his power, or too low and miſerable for his compaſſion and condeſcenſion.

Upon theſe grounds we may ſee ſomething of his wiſdom in the methods he has appointed, and in the ſubjects of his choice; why it has ſeemed good in his ſight, to hide theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes; for ſuch reaſons as theſe:

1. To ſtain the pride of all human glory.

2. To exclude every pretence of boaſting.

3. That there might be a ground of hope provided for the vileſt and meaneſt.

4. That

4. That the ſalvation of believers might be ſure, and not ſubject to miſcarry.

I. THE Lord of hoſts hath propoſed it, "to "ſtain the pride of all human glory*." How much men are diſpoſed to admire their own wiſdom, learning, and fancied accompliſhments, is ſufficiently obvious. But now the pride of all this glory is ſtained, inaſmuch as it is proved by experience to be utterly uſeleſs in the moſt important concerns. One man has talents to rule a kingdom; but is himſelf a ſlave to the vileſt luſts and paſſions. Another has courage to face death in a field of battle; yet, with regard to religion, is a mere coward: overawed by the feeble breath of the multitude, he is both aſhamed and afraid to practiſe what his conſcience convinces him is his duty. Another almoſt pretends to count the number of the ſtars, and to call them all by their names; yet has no more thought of the God that made the heavens and the earth, than the beaſts that periſh. Another delights in books and languages which few can underſtand but himſelf; nothing ſo falſe or fooliſh but he accounts it worth his ſtudy, if it has but the ſtamp of antiquity to recommend it; only the book of God, (though much more ancient than all his fables), becauſe it may be read in plain Engliſh, is thrown by as unworthy his notice. Another, who profeſſes to be ſcripture-wiſe, perverts the ſcripture, and abuſes his own reaſon, to eſtabliſh the moſt abſurd errors, or to overturn the plaineſt truths. Another amuſes himſelf with ſetting forth the praiſes of virtue and morality, while his own conduct furniſhes a ſtanding proof, either of the weakneſs of his ſcheme, or the inſincerity of his heart. Time would

* Iſa. xxiii. 9.

would fail to recount all the atchievements of these wise and prudent men. But behold the pride of them all stained! In the midst of all their acquisitions and inventions, they are strangers to God, to themselves, and to peace; they are without Christ, and without hope; those things which alone are of real importance are hid from their eyes. Here the desperate depravity and deceitfulness of the heart are manifested, to the glory of God; and it is clearly seen, that if he does not interpose to save, men are wholly unable to save themselves.

II. To exclude boasting. "Where is boasting "then? It is excluded." As the apostle speaks in another place, "If Abraham was justified by "works, he hath whereof to glory*:" so, if men were saved, either in whole or in part, by their own wisdom and prudence, they might in the same degree ascribe the glory and praise to themselves. They might say, My own power and wisdom gave me this; and thus God would be robbed of the honour due to his name. But now this is prevented. The word of the Lord is, "Let not the "wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the "mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich "man glory in his riches; but let him that glo-"rieth glory in this, that he understandeth and "knoweth me, that I am the Lord †." For whatever outward advantages some may seem to possess, as to the things of God, they stand altogether upon a level with the meanest. These things cannot be understood by any sagacity on our parts, but must be revealed by the Father of lights. What could be done in this way; you may collect from St Paul's representation in the first chapter of his

* Rom. iv. 2. † Jer. ix. 23, 24.

epiſtle to the Romans. Many of the Heathens were eminent for wiſdom and abilities, and made great proficiency in ſcience; but with regard to the knowledge of God, the reſult of all their reſearches was error, ſuperſtition, and idolatry; profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools, and their diſquiſitions had no other effect than to leave them without excuſe. Their practice (as will always be the caſe) was correſpondent to their principles; and in the midſt of a thouſand refinements in theory, they were abandoned to the groſſeſt and moſt deteſtable vices. If it be ſaid, Theſe had not the light of revelation, we may obſerve the ſame or ſimilar effects where the goſpel is known. With this ſuperior light, men are ſtill equally vain in their imaginations; and though they do not pay an outward and formal worſhip to ſtocks and ſtones, they are groſs idolaters; for they ſerve, love, and truſt the creature more than the Creator. When there is a difference, it is owing to grace, and grace is acknowledged. Such will readily ſay, "Not unto us, O Lord, not "unto us, but unto thy name be the praiſe *." Thus all pretence to boaſting is effectually excluded; and he that can glory upon good grounds, muſt glory only in the Lord.

If it ſhould be ſuppoſed that this repreſentation of things tends to diſcourage a diligent and ſerious inquiry after truth, I anſwer, When rightly underſtood, it will have juſt the contrary effect. What can be more ſuited to excite diligence, than to point out the method in which it will aſſuredly be crowned with ſucceſs? You cannot ſucceed without the light and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; but if conſcious of this, and aware of your own inſufficiency, you will ſeek his direction and guidance by

* Pſal. cxv. 1.

by humble prayer, it shall be afforded you. If you know not this, you will certainly be wearied in the end by repeated disappointments; but if you depend upon his teaching and co-operation in the use of the means he has appointed, your knowledge shall advance as the growing light.

III. This method of the divine procedure opens a door of hope to the vilest and the meanest. Let not any be cast down on account of any peculiar incapacity or difficulty in their case. If none but the wise and the learned, the rich, and those who are esteemed well-behaved and virtuous, could be saved, or if these stood in a fairer way for it than others, the greatest part of mankind might give up hope, and sit down in despair at once. But the case is exactly the reverse. It is true, the persons I am speaking of are not the worse for these distinctions, whenever they are sensible how vain and insufficient they are, and betake themselves as poor, helpless, miserable, blind, and naked, to flee for refuge to the mercy of God in Christ. But, alas! their supposed qualifications too often harden them to reject the counsel of God against themselves. They think themselves whole, and therefore see not the necessity or value of the physician. You who are sensible you have nothing of your own to trust to, take encouragement; the Lord has suited his gospel to your circumstances.

1. Are ye poor? The Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified the state of poverty by taking it on himself. He had not where to lay his head. He will not therefore despise you on this account. Only pray that you may likewise be poor in spirit. He looks through all outward distinctions, and often passes by a palace to make his presence and power known in a mud-wall'd cottage. Perhaps he ap-

pointed this ſtate in mercy ſo your ſouls, that you might not be diſtracted with many things, nor take up with a portion in this world. You cannot be in a lower or more afflicted ſtate than Lazarus, who, while he lay neglected at the rich man's gate, oppreſſed with want, and full of ſores, was a child of God, and the charge of angels.

2. Are you ignorant? If you cannot read, you miſs indeed a conſiderable advantage which you might derive from the peruſal of his good word, and I would wiſh you to attain it if practicable. If not, give ſo much more diligent attention to the preaching of the goſpel; intreat others to read the ſcriptures to you. But eſpecially pray. The Lord can teach you without a book, and make up for every defect. It is very poſſible for you to attain to know and love God, to love your neighbour, to rejoice in Chriſt, to keep his precepts, to be content with your ſtation, to live by faith, and to die with comfort, though you cannot diſtinguiſh one letter from another. The prophet Iſaiah, in the proſpect of goſpel-times, gives a deſcription of the way of ſalvation, which is peculiarly ſuited for your comfort. "And a high-way ſhall be there, "and it ſhall be called the way of holineſs; the "wayfaring men, though fools, ſhall not err there-"in *."

3. Have you been notorious open ſinners? Then you are in the leſs danger of truſting to your own righteouſneſs. And as to the reſt, if you are ſick of ſin, if you ſincerely deſire to be freed, as well from the power as from the guilt of it, you ſtand as fair for ſalvation as the moſt ſober and regular perſon upon the earth. St Paul, ſpeaking to thoſe who had been partakers of the ſaving grace of God, after he had made an enumeration of the blackeſt

* Iſa. xxxv. 8.

blackeſt ſins which man can be guilty of, adds, "And ſuch were ſome of you: but ye are waſhed, "but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the "name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our "God *."

IV. In this way the ſalvation of believers is ſure. If it depended on any thing in man, it might miſcarry. Man's boaſted wiſdom is ſoon changed. A few hours of a fever, a ſmall blow on the head, may change a wiſe man into a fool. "But it is "of grace, to the end that the promiſe might be "ſure to all the ſeed †." Adam had a ſtock of wiſdom, yet when he was truſted with his own happineſs, he could not preſerve it. But the ſecond Adam is all-ſufficient. Our dependance is upon him. To thoſe who are babes, he is wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and all that they want. If this concern had been left to the wiſdom of man, it is moſt probable that Chriſt would have lived and died in vain, without a ſingle real diſciple. But now the diſpenſation of grace is in his hands, we are ſure that ſome will believe in him; and we are likewiſe ſure, that thoſe who truly do ſo ſhall never be aſhamed of their hope.

Now, from what has been ſaid,

1. Inquire what is the temper of your minds with regard to this appointment. Our Lord rejoiced in it as the wiſe and holy will, the good pleaſure of his heavenly Father. If you are diſpleaſed at it, is it not a proof that you have not the mind which was in Chriſt Jeſus? If God *wills* one thing, and you *will* another, where muſt the contention end? To what purpoſe, or with what pretence, can you uſe that expreſſion in the Lord's

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Rom. iv. 16.

prayer, "Thy will be done," when in effect your hearts rise with enmity against it? This is one topic from whence we may confirm the declaration of scripture, that man by nature is not only a transgressor of the law, but an enemy, yea enmity itself, against God *. They may pay some profession of regard to the power that made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water, while they worship they know not what, according to their own vain and dark imaginations. But the attributes and characters of God revealed in scripture, his holiness, justice, truth, and sovereignty, they cannot bear. They are enemies to the declared strictness of his moral government, and enemies to the methods by which he has proposed to communicate his grace. But he is God, and who can controul him? Who can say unto him, What hast thou done? You must either submit to his golden sceptre in time, or his rod of iron will fall upon you for ever.

2. Does it not appear from hence, that the doctrine of free sovereign grace is rather an encouragement to awakened and broken-hearted sinners than otherwise? If you are most unworthy of mercy, and destitute of every plea, should you not be glad to hear, that the Lord does not expect worthiness in those whom he saves, but that he himself has provided the only plea which he will accept, and a plea which cannot be over-ruled, the righteousness and mediation of his well-beloved Son?

* Rom. viii. 7.

SER-

SERMON VI.

OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

MATTH. ix. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

THE two preceding verſes have led us to conſider grace (if I may ſo ſpeak) in the unfathomable depths of the ſovereign will and good pleaſure of God. In this verſe, our Lord calls us to the contemplation of his own glorious perſon, authority, and fulneſs. In him grace is treaſured up as in a repoſitory for communication, to be diſpenſed to needy periſhing ſinners.

When an ambaſſador is deputed from an earthly prince, to tranſact ſome buſineſs of great importance, he produces his commiſſion and authority, without which all he could propoſe would be little regarded; and thoſe who are moſt honoured and attended to, are intruſted with full powers, that is, with a liberty to act and propoſe as occaſions offer, without farther inſtructions, and with full ſecurity that the King will ratify and confirm whatever they agree to, in the ſame manner as if he had done it in his own perſon. Thus (if we may preſume to compare ſmall things with great) our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great meſſenger of the Father's love, before he invites every weary heavy-laden ſinner to come to him, with a gracious aſſurance that he will receive, and pardon, and ſave them all, he condeſcends in this verſe (as it were) to open his

commission, to instruct us in his own personal dignity, and to communicate to us the example and unlimited authority which he has received from God to treat with rebels. He knows what hearts of unbelief we have; how greatly an awakened conscience is terrified with guilt; how busy Satan is to urge us to question either his ability or his willingness to save; and therefore he would leave nothing undone that might encourage us to come to him, and find rest for our souls. May his gracious Spirit enable me to speak aright, and so open your hearts to understand what may be said upon this high subject, that we may have joy and peace in believing.

The words contain a threefold declaration.

1. Of his person: "No man knoweth the Son, "but the Father; neither knoweth any man the "Father, save the Son."

2. Of his authority: "All things are delivered "to me of my Father."

3. Of his office: Summarily intimated in the expression, "He to whomsoever the Son will re-"veal him."

To treat these points in their proper extent, would be a subject more than equal to the abilities and life of man. Much would be left unsaid at last. We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. This is a theme fit for an angel's tongue; the most exalted angel, or all the angels in heaven, would be unable to comprehend it, for it is infinite, as our text declares. None knows the Son, but the Father. Here we are too prone to think highly of our own knowledge; but when we arrive in yonder world of light, to see him *as he is*, we shall be ashamed of the highest conceptions we had of him, and of our most laboured attempts to express them, while we were imprisoned in this distant land. Then we shall say with the Queen of Sheba,

Sheba, "Behold the half, the thousandth part was "not told us." In the mean time, he is pleased to accept our imperfect stammerings, to assist our feeble inquiries, and does not disdain (as he justly might) to hear us take his name upon our polluted lips.

I. THE inconceivable dignity of his person is pointed out by two expressions.

1. "No man" (or rather, as it might be rendered here and in many other places, "No one *) "knoweth the Father, but the Son." No one.

1*st*, Not the wisest man in a state of nature. Various degrees of knowledge there are amongst the sons of men. There is a great difference between man and man; between one who knows not his letters, or any thing beyond the bounds of his own village; and another who has a large acquaintance with arts and sciences, history and languages, and has surveyed the manners and boundaries of many nations. But, with regard to the knowledge of Christ, the philosopher and the shepherd, the king and the beggar, are just upon a level. Of two blind men, one may know many things more than the other, but with regard to the knowledge of light and colours, they will be both ignorant alike.

Some of you perhaps think yourselves wiser than many of your neighbours. But I cannot too often remind you, that if you know not Christ, all your wisdom is folly, and you will find it so at last.

2*dly*, Neither do his own people know him in the sense of the text. Some knowledge of him indeed they have, which is their differencing character from the world. But how small a portion! That they know him a little, is plain, because they

* Οὐδεις.

love him and trust him; but how little, is plain likewise, because their love is so faint, and their trust so feeble. Their doubts, fears, complaints, and backslidings, are so many mournful proofs that they are but poorly acquainted with him, and sufficiently evidence, that a great part of what we account our knowledge, is not real and experimental, but notional only. The literal sense of what we read concerning Jesus, is attainable by study and human teaching; but the spiritual import can only be received from Him who teaches the heart, who increases it in us by the various exercises and dispensations we pass through; and the best have much more to learn than they have already attained. There are indeed happy moments when he manifests himself to the eye of faith, in his glory, and in his love, as he did to Peter in the mount, and to Thomas, when a sight of his wounds conquered his unbelief, and made him in a transport of joy cry out, "My Lord, and my God." But these visits, though they have a powerful influence to conquer sin and fear, are transient; and when the cause is withdrawn, there is a proportionable abatement in the effect. The knowledge of Christ, in the present life, may be compared to the knowledge which a shepherd has of the sea, from having viewed it from the top of a cliff. In a sense it may be said, he has seen the sea; but how little has he seen in comparison of what lies beyond the reach of his eye! How inadequate is such a prospect to give him an idea answerable to the length, and breadth, and depth, of the immense ocean! Nay, farther,

Lastly, The glorified saints, and holy angels, who behold as much of his glory as creatures can bear, do not know him as he is. They are filled with his power and love. He comprehends them, but they cannot him. A vessel cast into the sea, can but

but receive according to its capacity. Thus are they filled with his fulneſs till they can hold no more; but his glory ſtill remains infinite and boundleſs. The glorious ſeraphims, therefore, are repreſented as hiding *their faces* with their wings, unable to bear the ſplendour of his preſence. For,

4*thly*, "None knows the Son but the Father." This proves his divinity. God only knows himſelf. The Son is his eternal Word, his eternal Wiſdom, and therefore beyond the higheſt reach of finite underſtanding.

2. "None knows the Father but the Son." Here I might repeat the former particulars. God has made ſomething known of himſelf in his works, much in his word, more ſtill in his grace. All men have ſome faint perceptions of his power and preſence. He manifeſts himſelf to his own family below, ſtill more to his family above; yet, after all, he is ſaid to dwell in light which no man can approach. None knows him but the Son, and he knows him perfectly, knows the incomprehenſible God; therefore he is God himſelf. As he ſaid to Philip, "He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Fa-"ther *."

Now, if we had no other proof of this doctrine but the paſſage before us, ſince this is the declaration of the true and faithful witneſs, it ſhould be accepted as deciſive. But as this is the great myſtery of godlineſs, the pillar and ground of truth, the foundation of all our hopes, I ſhall take this opportunity to confirm it more largely from other concurrent teſtimonies of ſcripture.

By the Son, I mean the perſon who ſpake theſe words: He who was foretold by the prophets; who in the fulneſs of time came into the world; who, with reſpect to his divine nature, is called

* John, xvi. 9.

the Word *," and, with respect to his human nature, was born of the Virgin Mary: he who was known upon earth by the name of Jesus; whose history is related by the evangelists; who suffered a shameful and accursed death upon the cross, without the gates of Jerusalem. Of him we affirm, "That he was, and is, the true God, and eternal life †." In proof of this, besides what has been already said, let the following particulars be considered.

1*st*, That the proper and peculiar titles of God are attributed to him frequently in the scriptures; so frequently, that it would be a very long task to transcribe them all. Let a few, the application of which to Christ is express and indisputable, suffice for a specimen: "The Word was God:" "His "name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us:" "Jehovah our Righteousness:" "The mighty God." In the same style he speaks of himself by his servants the prophets and apostles: "Thy maker is "thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; "and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the "God of the whole earth shall he be called." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends "of the earth; for I am God, and there is none "else." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning "and the end, the first and the last, the Almighty ‡."

Amidst the variety of testimonies which might be adduced to this purpose, there are two which are peculiarly observable. The Psalmist expresses the majesty, power, and immutability of God, in these sublime terms: "Of old thou hast laid the "foundations of the earth, and the heavens are "the

* John, i, 1. † 1 John, v. 20.
‡ John, i. 1.; Matth. i. 23.; Jer. xxiii. 6.; Isa. ix. 6.; Isa. liv. 5.; Isa. xlv. 22.; Rev. i. 8, 11.

"the work of thine hands. They shall perish, "but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall "wax old like a garment; as a vesture thou shalt "change them, and they shall be changed: but "thou art the same, and thy years shall have no "end *." Surely none can deny but this ascription must be incommunicably due to the Almighty; yet the author of the epistle to the Hebrews † applies these words directly to the Son of God. The other passage I intend is the vision of Isaiah, recorded in his sixth chapter; which not only proves the point in hand, but irrefragably establishes the doctrine of the Trinity. For the Lord of hosts, whom Isaiah saw and heard, is affirmed by St John to have been the Son ‡, by St Paul to have been the Holy Ghost ||. Isaiah, therefore, had a manifestation of what was afterwards in explicit words set forth to the faith of the church, that "there "are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, "the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three "are one **."

2*dly*, His works upon earth were such as necessarily suppose a divine power. Who can controul the elements, raise the dead, command the devils, search the heart, and forgive sin, but God alone ††? If it should be said, that many of his servants and followers wrought miracles equal to his, by a delegated power, and therefore this argument is not conclusive; I answer, There is an apparent difference in the manner of their working, which proves the disparity between them and him. They could do nothing but in his name, and by his power; they usually addressed themselves to him by prayer, and always

* Psal. cii. 25.—27. † Heb. i. 10.—12.
‡ John, xii. 41. || Acts, xxviii. 25. ** 1 John, v. 7.
†† Mark, iv. 39.; John, xi. 43.; Luke, iv. 36.; Mark, ii.

always aſcribed the praiſe and glory to him *. But his power was independent, ſovereign, and unlimited: "He ſpake, and it was done; he commanded, and it ſtood faſt." At the breath of his rebuke, the raging tempeſt and the boiſterous ſeas were inſtantly huſhed into a perfect calm. The deaf heard his voice, and the dead came forth from their graves, at the firſt call.

3dly, His works of office can be performed by none but God. This might be proved concerning each of the offices he exerciſes in conſequence of his high character as Mediator between God and man; but I ſhall ſpeak only of two.

(1.) It is his office to keep his believing people in this preſent evil world. To act † the part of a ſhepherd towards them, to ſupply their wants of every kind, to direct their ſteps, to controul their enemies, to over-rule all things for their good, and to be a very preſent help in every time of trouble; to execute this important charge, it is neceſſary that his knowledge, his compaſſion, his power, and his patience, muſt be boundleſs. His eye muſt be every moment upon all their caſes at once; his ear muſt be inceſſantly open to receive the prayers of all people, nations, and languages; his arm muſt be continually ſtretched out to ſupport ſo many that ſtand, to raiſe up ſo many that fall, to afford ſeaſonable and ſuitable ſupplies, at the ſame inſtant, to the diſtreſſes and temptations of millions. If this is the office he has undertaken, and if he is acknowledged ſufficient and faithful in the diſcharge of it, what more undeniable evidence can be given, that he has all the attributes we can conceive as eſſential and peculiar to the Godhead? The provocations, defects, and backſlidings, of his people, are likewiſe ſo numerous, ſo often repeated,

* Acts, iii. 12.—16. † Matth. ii. 6. ποιμανει.

ed, and attended with such black aggravations, that if he was not God invincible in goodness, unchangeable in purpose, if his mercy was not, as is his majesty, infinite, he would be wearied out, and provoked to cast them off for ever. The great reason why he bore with his people of old, holds equally strong with respect to us: "I am the Lord, "I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not "consumed *."

(2.) The like may be said of the high office, character, and appointment, he has received, to be the Judge of the world, of angels, and of men. For, besides that it is quite incredible that God, who is jealous of his glory, should entrust this most illustrious prerogative to any mere creature, it seems evident at first sight, that no creature can be possibly qualified for the discharge of it. To the great and final Judge all hearts must be open, all desires known, and every secret disclosed. He must be intimately acquainted with the counsels and plans that lay hid in God from eternity; he must have a sovereign, comprehensive, intuitive view of every event, of every design, that took place within the limits of time and creation; he must have unlimited authority to pronounce the decisive sentence which will fix the everlasting state of all intelligent beings, and uncontrouled power for the immediate and irrevocable execution of his supreme decree. And what higher than this can our most laboured conceptions reach of the Almighty God! If it be said, that Christ will act by a delegated authority, we answer, It is a contradiction to say, that God *can* delegate his *omniscience* to a creature; and without this attribute, any assignable measure of wisdom or power would be insufficient. The power and fulness of the Godhead must so reside in the Judge,

* Mal. iii. 6.

Judge, as justly to denominate him to be "God "over all, blessed for ever *." And this the scripture assures us is the case in fact. The man Christ Jesus, who is appointed the Judge of quick and dead, is so intimately and essentially united to, and inhabited by the Deity †, that he is the proper object of our faith, as the true God, and eternal life.

4thly, The honours he claims from us afford a further argument for his proper divinity. He challenges our supreme love, obedience, trust, and worship: "Ye believe in God, believe also in "me." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of "man, and drink his blood, ye have no life "in you." "That all men should honour the Son "as they honour the Father." "My sheep know "my voice, and I know them, and they follow "me; and I give unto them eternal life." "I am "the light of the world." "I am the resurrection "and the life ‡." If we could suppose an apostle or an angel speaking of himself in terms like these, requiring our unlimited dependence, and directing our hope and love to center wholly on him, we might justly reject him as a blasphemer. How the apostles understood these expressions, and that they did not mistake our Lord's meaning, is evident from the behaviour of Thomas. He saluted his risen Saviour, "My Lord and my God ||." Had his transport of joy carried him too far in giving this ascription to Jesus, he would doubtless have corrected him, and provided us with a caution against committing the like fault. For who that has tasted his love, and been made partaker of the power of his resurrection, can avoid adoring him with the utmost

* Rom. ix. 5. † Col. ii. 9.
‡ John, xiv. 1.; vi. 23.; v. 23. x. 27. 28. viii. 12.; xi. 25.
|| John. xx. 28.

utmost homage their words can expreſs, or their hearts conceive!

From hence we may take occasion to obſerve,

1. His wonderful condeſcenſion, that, for us and our ſalvation, he ſtooped ſo low, drew a vail over his eternal glories, and appeared in the form of a ſervant, to ſuffer, and to die: "Though he was "rich, for our ſakes he became poor, that we "through his poverty might be made rich *." This was love paſſing knowledge, to pour out his blood, his life, his ſoul, for thoſe who by nature and practice were enemies and rebels, diſobedient to his government, and averſe to his grace.

2. What a bleſſed and glorious hope is ſet before awakened ſinners! Add to the conſideration of his perſon, what we have yet to offer from the word of God concerning his authority and purpoſe, and ſay if theſe truths do not give ſufficient encouragement to believe and be ſaved!

3. How awful muſt be the caſe of thoſe who ſhall be found in final rebellion againſt him, and die in a ſtate of impenitence and unbelief! Alas! poor obſtinate ſinners, that have ſtood out ſo long, will you ſtill harden your hearts, and ſtop your ears, and ruſh (like the thoughtleſs horſe in the battle) upon your own deſtruction? Do you conſider whom you are oppoſing? "Did ever any "harden himſelf againſt the Lord and proſper †?" "Have you an arm like God, or can you thunder "with a voice like him ‡?" Where will you ſtand, or what will you ſay, "when he ſhall ariſe to ſhake "terribly the earth? when he ſhall be revealed in "fire, to take vengeance on all that know not "God, and obey not the goſpel ||." O kiſs the Son

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Job, ix. 4. ‡ Job, xl. 9.
|| 2 Theſſ. i. 8.

Son, throw down your arms, and fall proſtrate at at his footſtool, leſt his anger awake, and you periſh without hope; for in a little time the great day of his wrath will be revealed, which will burn like "a furnace, and all the proud, yea, and all that "do wickedly, ſhall be ſtubble; and the day that "cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord of "hoſts, that it ſhall leave them neither root nor "branch *." Then will it appear, that thoſe, and thoſe only are bleſſed, who put their truſt in him: "For thoſe who truſt in him ſhall never be aſham-"ed: but when Chriſt who is their life ſhall ap-"pear, they alſo ſhall appear with him in glory †."

* Mal. iv. 1. † Col. iii. 4.

SER.

SERMON VII.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.

MATTH. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

WE have ſpoken ſomething of the dignity and excellence of that Mighty One on whom our help is laid; and are now to conſider,

II. The covenant-authority he is intruſted with to manage the great concerns of man's ſalvation. He is not only infinitely ſufficient, but divinely appointed for this great work.

Of this covenant there is expreſs mention in many parts of ſcripture, to ſome of which I have referred in the note *. It is ſtyled the *covenant* of peace, the everlaſting, ordered, and ſure covenant. The power and efficacy of this covenant reſpected the future incarnation of our Saviour. He aſſerted his right, while in the form of a ſervant, in the words of my text; and to the ſame purpoſe are the words of John the Baptiſt: "The Father lo-"veth the Son, and hath delivered all things into "his hands †." But the full manifeſtation of it was deferred to the time of his reſurrection, when, and by which, he was declared to be the Son of God

* Pſ. lxxxix. 19.; Prov. viii. 23.; Iſ. xiii. 1.— 6. compared with Matth. xii. 18.—21.; Iſ. xlix. 8. 9.; Zech. vi. 13.

† John, iii. 35.

God with power *. Hence, before he left his disciples, he assured them, "All power is committed "to me in heaven and in earth †."

The sum is, that our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of his divine nature, and his voluntary undertaking in our flesh, to fulfil all righteousness for us, both as to obedience and satisfaction, is exalted in that nature wherein he suffered, to be the sovereign Judge and Lord of all ‡. He it is now with whom we have to do. The holy God, considered without respect to the covenant of grace, is a consuming fire to sinners; and we cannot stand before him. But now he reveals himself, he dwells as in his temple, in the man Christ Jesus. He has entrusted all his glory, and all his grace in his hands; and to him we are to look, on him we are to depend, for all the blessings we need for time and eternity. For "all things are delivered "to him of the Father." All things is a most comprehensive expression. We may distribute it as referring to all persons, all blessings, and all dispensations.

1. All persons are in his hands. Hence his sublime title, "King of kings, and Lord of lords ‖." He doth what he will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth. Thus Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him.

1*st*, He is Lord over his enemies, and those that hate him. He rules them with a rod of iron, and so disposes their designs as to make them (though against their wills) the means and instruments of promoting his own purposes and glory §. They are his servants even when they rage most against him. He has a bridle in their mouths to check and turn

* Rom. i. 4. † Matth. xxviii. 18. ‡ Phil. ii. 6.—11. ‖ Rev. xix. 16.; Dan. iv. 35; Is. vi. compared with John, xii. 41. § Ps. ii. 9.

turn them at his pleasure. He can and often does controul them when they seem most sure of success, and always sets them bounds, which they cannot pass. So he shewed his power over Pharaoh of old; the haughty king's resistance only gave occasion for a more glorious display of the greatness and goodness of the God of Israel. So he humbled the pride of Herod, and gave him up, in the midst of his guards, a prey to worms*. And thus, sooner or later, all his enemies are brought to lick the dust before him.

2*dly*, But especially he is Lord of his own people. By nature indeed they likewise are his enemies, but he knows them all by name. They have been in a peculiar manner given him by the Father †; he accounts them his portion, and he will not lose his own ‡. He knows where to find them, and when to call them; and when his time is come, one word or look from him can disarm them in a moment, and bring them humbly to his feet. How soon did he stop and change the persecuting Saul ||! When they are thus made willing in the day of his power, he takes them under his special care; and whoso toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. He guides, and guards, and feeds, and strengthens them; he keeps them night and day, waters them every moment, and will not suffer any to pluck them out of his hand, nor will he himself leave them or forsake them, till he has done all that he has spoken to them of. He gives them likewise a new heart and gracious dispositions, suited to the honourable relation he has brought them into; so that they delight in his precepts, and yield him a chearful, habitual, and universal obedience, from

* Acts, xii. 23. † John, xvii. 6. ‡ John, x. 15. 16.
|| Acts, ix.

from the conſtraining ſenſe they have received of his inexpreſſible love.

2. All bleſſings are at his diſpoſal. Is not this a welcome declaration to awakened ſouls? What is the bleſſing you want? Seek to Jeſus, and you ſhall not be diſappointed. Hear his gracious invitation, "Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to "the waters, and ye that have no money; come "ye, come and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk "without money, and without price.—Incline your "ear, and come unto me: hear, and your ſoul "ſhall live *." The promiſed bleſſings which he holds in his hands, are the very ſame that the awakened enlightened conſcience muſt have, and can have only from him.

1*st*, Pardon. How needful, how valuable is the pardon of ſin to thoſe who know what ſin is, what it deſerves, and what a ſhare they have in it! Such are incapable of taking comfort till they know how God may be reconciled and ſin forgiven. Theſe are the perſons to whom Jeſus ſays, "Look unto "me, and be ye ſaved. I, even I am he that blot-"teth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, "and will not remember thy ſin †."

2*dly*, Righteouſneſs. By believing in him ſinners are not only pardoned, but juſtified. They are accepted in the beloved, and accounted righteous by his righteouſneſs imputed to them, which we are aſſured is unto all, and upon all that believe, without any difference or exception ‡. Hence his people adore him, and glory in him by his name, *The Lord our Righteouſneſs*. In him they poſſeſs a righteouſneſs anſwerable to the demands of the holy law, have confidence and liberty of acceſs to God at preſent, though conſcious of innumerable

* Iſa. lv. 1. † Iſa. xlv. 22.; xliii. 25. ‡ Rom. iii. 22.

merable deficiencies in themſelves, and they ſhall ſtand with boldneſs before him in this righteouſneſs, and not be aſhamed in the great day of his appearance, when he ſhall come to judge the world.

3*dly*, Strength. The forgiveneſs of ſin that is paſt would little avail, unleſs there was proviſion made for a continual ſupply of needful grace. Without this we ſhall quickly grow weary, yeild to the force of ſurrounding temptations, till at length the latter end would be worſe than the beginning. But now every ſincere ſoul may be freed from this fear. The way of prevention is pointed out, and the ſucceſs infallibly ſecured by that one promiſe, tho' there are many to the ſame effect, "They that wait "on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength *."

4*thly*, Healing. This is often neceſſary; for the ſpiritual warfare is not to be maintained long without wounds. Our great enemy is ſo ſubtle, ſo watchful, ſo well provided with temptations adapted to every temper and circumſtance; and we are ſo weak, unpractiſed, and ſo often remiſs and off our guard, that he will at times prevail to bring us into a dark, barren, backſliding ſtate, deſpoiled of comfort, and oppreſſed with fears. But ſee what a good and gracious Shepherd we have: hear his comfortable words: "I will ſeek that which was "loſt, and bring again that which was driven a-"way, and will bind up that which was broken, "and will ſtrengthen that which was ſick †."

5*thly*, Support under trouble. He has engaged to lead his people ſafely ‡, through fire and through water. He gives them leave to caſt all their care upon him, with an aſſurance that he careth for them. He has ſaid, "All things ſhall work toge-"ther for their good; that his grace ſhall be ſuf-"ficient

* Iſa. xl. 31. † Ezek. xxxiv. 16. ‡ Iſa. xliii. 2.; 1 Pet. iii. 17.; Rom. viii. 28.; 2 Cor. xii. 19.

" ficient for them ; and that in good time he will " bruise Satan under their feet, make them more " than conquerors," and place them out of the reach of sin and sorrow for ever. Besides the habitual peace which arises from the believing consideration of these truths, he has likewise peculiar seasons of refreshment, when he manifests himself to the soul in a way the world knows not of, and often makes the hour of their sharpest trials the time of their sweetest and highest consolations : " As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our " consolation aboundeth by Christ *."

3. All dispensations are under his direction. He is Lord of all, and does according to his pleasure among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth. He is the supreme disposer,

1*st*, Of these external dispensations which are distinguished by the name of *providential*.

(1.) Those that are welcome and prosperous are both his gift and his purchase. To his people they came free : but he paid dear for them. And this gives them their chief value in the judgement of those who know him, to receive them as the pledges and fruits of his redeeming love. When the blessings of common providence are received and enjoyed as the gifts of God reconciled in Christ, they are then, and not otherwise, truly comfortable. It is this thought enables the poor believer often to taste a sweeter relish and flavour in bread and water, than the voluptuary ever knew in the wasteful profusion and studied refinements of luxury. To be able to look back and see how the hand of our gracious Lord has led us from our childhood, chose and managed better for us than we could have done, corrected our mistakes, and in many things exceeded our desires ; to look round

* 2 Cor. i. 5.

round and see all our concerns in his sure keeping, who delights in our prosperity, and will suffer nothing to grieve us, but what he intends to employ as means for our greater advantage; to look forward and see, that he has prepared still better things for us than ever our eyes beheld, or our hearts conceived,—how cheering are these views! Those who are thus stayed upon the Lord Jesus, as over-ruling and managing all their concerns, are not terrified with every shaking leaf, "their hearts "are fixed, trusting in the Lord."

(2.) Afflictive dispensations are likewise of his sending. And the consideration of his hand in them, the good he designs us by them, the assurance we have of being supported under them, and brought through them; according to the degree in which these things are apprehended by faith, and accompanied with a humbling sense of their own demerits, his people submit to his appointment with patience and thankfulness, and say, after the pattern which he has left them, The cup which my Saviour puts into my hand, shall I not drink it?

In brief, it is he who appointed the time and place of our birth, and all the successive connections of our lives. Our civil and our religious liberties are both owing to his favour; and in these he has been peculiarly favourable to *us*. "He has not "dealt so with every nation."

2*dly*, The dispensation of grace. It is he who raises up instruments to preach his gospel, appoints them their places, furnishes them with that measure of gifts and sufficiency which he sees requisite and best. And it is he only that makes their poor labours successful. He sends his word to some, and brings others to his word: and in both cases, he so makes use of ordinary means, that to a common eye he seems to do nothing, when in reality he does *all*. He brought St Paul to Corinth, and

maintained him there a conſiderable time againſt all the efforts of his enemies *. He over-ruled the thoughtleſs rambling of Oneſimus †, and led him, by a way which he knew not, to the means by which he had appointed to bring him to the knowledge of himſelf. And theſe inſtances are recorded for our inſtruction, as ſpecimens of what he does in the ſame kind every day.

3*dly*, The diſpenſation of death. Our times are in his hands. He claims it as his own prerogative ‡, that he keeps the key of death and the inviſible ſtate. None can remove us ſooner, none can detain us a moment longer, than his call. In this likewiſe he is little obſerved. We charge death to fevers, frights, and falls: but theſe are only the meſſengers which he ſends. Sin has brought us all under a ſentence of death; but the moment and the manner of the execution befall us according to his good pleaſure. Till then, though his providence leads us through fire and water, though we walk upon the brink of a thouſand apparent, and a million of unſeen dangers, we are in reality in perfect ſafety. Having appointed St Paul to ſtand before Cæſar, though the tempeſt greatly aſſaulted, and ſeemingly overpowered the ſhip he was in, St Paul was as ſafe on the ſtormy ſea, when all probable hope of being ſaved ‖ was taken away, as Cæſar himſelf upon his throne. But when his time is come, in vain are all the aſſiſtance of friends, or the healing arts of medicines, to procure the ſmalleſt reſpite.

4*thly*, The diſpenſation of judgement. "The "Father hath committed all judgement to the "Son **;" and has eſpecially appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by the man Jeſus Chriſt ††, whom he hath ordained. Then

* Acts, xviii. 10. † Phil. 11. ‡ Rev. i. 18.
‖ Acts, xxvii. 24. ** John, v. 22. †† Acts, xvii. 30.

Then his glory shall be confessed by all. Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. Awful will the day be to those who hate him, when he shall appear in flaming fire, to convince sinners of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him *. They must give an account of all. Account, did I say? they can give none; but will be struck dumb before him, and hear with horror their dreadful doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, "prepared for the devil and his angels †."

But it will be a joyful time to his own people. The clouds of infirmity, affliction, and reproach, under which they are now obscured, shall vanish away, and they shall shine forth like the sun in the presence of their Father. God, even their own God, shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. They shall be glorified, and their enemies ashamed. What joy will fill their hearts, when Jesus the Judge shall own his relation to them before assembled worlds, and shall say, "Come, ye blessed of "my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for "you from the foundation of the world." Then sorrow and sighing shall be heard no more; but songs of triumph and shouts of everlasting joy shall take place; and so shall they be ever with the Lord.

How are your hearts affected with this subject? Do you not expect that I should close it with a suitable word of application?

1. To those who are as yet in their sins. Will you not tremble before this great Lord God? If these things are not so, if you can prove that we have followed cunningly-devised fables, go on secure.

* Jude, 15. † Matth. xxv. 41.

But have I not your conſciences on my ſide? Do you not feel a ſecret foreboding that theſe are the truths of God? And dare you ſtill perſiſt? Do you not ſee that you are already in his hands? In a moment he could break you in pieces, yet he ſpares. He affords you one opportunity more. To-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice; leſt to-morrow ſhould ſurpriſe you into eternity, and the weight of unpardoned ſins ſhould ſink you into the loweſt hell. As he has power to puniſh, ſo likewiſe he is mighty to ſave. Believe his word, and live. His obedience unto death is a plea with which you may approach the mercy-ſeat. He has power to take away your heart of ſtone, to ſubdue your enmity, to forgive your ſins; and what he does he does freely, without money, and without price. You need not, you cannot mend yourſelves before you come to him. If you ſeek him, he will be found of you; but if you obſtinately reject him, you will periſh under the moſt aggravated guilt, as ſinners againſt the light and grace of the goſpel.

2. You that ſee your need of a Saviour, lift up your heads and rejoice. Is he not, thus qualified, able to ſave to the uttermoſt? Why ſhould you keep back, when he bids you come unto him, that you may find reſt? Could you invent any invitations more free, more full than thoſe that are recorded in the goſpel? Can you deſire any ſtronger ſecurity than the blood of Jeſus, and the oath of him that liveth for ever? Do you wiſh to know how other great ſinners have ſucceeded in their application to him? Search the ſcriptures, and read how he ſaved Mary Magdalen, the dying thief, the cruel jailor, the perſecuting Saul, and many of thoſe who were actually concerned in nailing him to the croſs. Be patient, continue waiting on him in prayer, and you ſhall find he has not inclined you to ſeek his face in vain.

3. To

3. To believers I hope this is a comfortable theme. You see all your concerns are in safe hands. He to whom you have committed your souls, is able to keep them. Jesus, who has all authority and power in heaven and in earth, vouchsafes to be your Shepherd. What then can you want who are at his providing? What have you to fear who are under his protection? Why then do you so often distrust, so often complain? It is because your faith is weak. Are you tempted to think you could place yourselves to more advantage than he has placed you, that you could do better without the afflictions he is pleased to send you, that you cannot spare what he takes away, nor do well without something which he with-holds? Reject all such thoughts; they are highly dishonourable to your Saviour, and to your profession. Those who know not God *must* reason thus; but you have a covenant-promise, that all things are working together for your good. "This is not your rest, it "is polluted." But you will soon be at home; and then, when by a clearer light you look back upon the way by which the Lord led you through the wilderness, you will be ashamed (if shame is compatible with the heavenly state) of your misapprehensions while in this dark world, and will confess to his praise, that mercy and goodness surrounded you in every step, and that the Lord did all things well. What you will then see, it is now your duty and your privilege to believe. If you sincerely desire his guidance in all things, labour to submit to it. The path which he has marked out for you is difficult, but he has trod it before you, and it leads to glory. The time is short. Yet a little while, and you shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

SERMON VIII.

THE GLORY AND GRACE OF GOD REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST.

MATTH. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

THE love we bear to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the confidence we place in him, will always be exactly proportioned to the apprehensions we form of him. Therefore to "grow in grace, "and in the knowledge of him *," are spoken of as inseparably connected. On this account the scriptures are frequent and full in describing him to us, that we may have a large acquaintance with his all-sufficiency, and be delivered from our sins and fears. An awakened conscience that sees the need of a Saviour, well knows that the person who can deservedly lay claim to its trust, must have these three properties, power, authority, and intention to save. How these eminently belong to Jesus, we learn from his own words here. Power belongeth to him, for he is a divine person, the Creator, Possessor, and Upholder of all things. Authority is his, for all things are delivered to him. Thus far we have proceeded, and are now to speak of his intention or office, the design of his appearance, and for which he is authorised. This

* 2 Pet. ii. 18.

This is intimated in the close of my text. We are therefore now to speak,

III. Of his office, summarily included in this one thing, *To reveal the knowledge of God.* "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

The knowledge of God here spoken of, intends something more than merely to know that there is a God. Some faint apprehensions of this, all men have by nature. This great truth is so clearly manifested in the works of creation and providence, that any man would be greatly offended if he was supposed to be ignorant of it. But as it is one thing to know that there is a king over the nation, and quite another thing *to know the king*, so as to have liberty of access to him, and an interest in his favour; so is it in the case before us. Our Lord did not come to tell us that there is a God, (the devils know this, and tremble), but to reveal to us such a knowledge of God as may stand with our comfort; to teach us how poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners may draw near to God with hopes in his mercy, and call him their Father and their friend.

Now, besides the revelation of this knowledge in the Old Testament, which may be properly ascribed to Christ, inasmuch as he was the Lord, guide, and teacher of his church from the beginning, and instructed Moses and the prophets in the things concerning himself,—I say, besides this, (which was made at sundry times, and in divers manners, in a more dark and imperfect way), our Lord Jesus, through his incarnation, has vouchsafed us a two-fold revelation of that knowledge of God in which standeth our eternal life.

1. In his Person.
2. By his Spirit.

I. In his Perſon. In this reſpect he is ſaid to be, "The brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the * "expreſs image of his † ſubſtance." That God is great, and good, and wiſe, appears in part from his works; but it is but a ſmall portion of theſe attributes we can ſpell out in this way; and there are other perfections in God, of which we can gain no certain knowledge, without a farther revelation. But would we ſee a glorious diſplay of the great God, let us turn our eyes to Jeſus, and behold him by faith in two principal views.

1. As hanging upon the croſs. Could we have ſeen this awful tranſaction, and been in a right frame of mind, we ſhould naturally have aſked ſuch queſtions as theſe, Who is he? What has he done? Had we been told, This perſon, thus deſtitute and tormented, is the beloved Son of God, who knew no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth; we muſt have farther aſked, Why then was he ſcourged, wounded, and nailed to the tree? Why are thoſe barbarous men permitted to mock his ſufferings? Why does he not deliver himſelf, and deſtroy his enemies? The proper anſwer to theſe queſtions includes a revelation of the divine perfections.

1*st*, Wiſdom. We had deſerved to periſh, but his mercy deſigned to ſave us with an everlaſting ſalvation. Yet this muſt be in a way worthy of himſelf. Sin muſt be puniſhed, and the honour of his broken law vindicated. How could this be done, and the righteouſneſs of God made to harmonize with our peace? A wiſdom aſtoniſhing to angels, is manifeſted in deviſing this wonderful means. No ſacrifices‡ or offerings, no acts of obedience or mediation, which creatures could ſupply, would have been of the leaſt avail when the injured

* Heb. i. 3. † Της Υποστασεως. ‡ Heb. x. 4.—7.

injured majesty of God demanded a satisfaction. But the eternal Word, united to our nature, afforded a propitiation worthy of God, and suitable for us. Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin *, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, available for all those who flee to him as the hope set before them, for refuge from approaching wrath.

2*dly*, Love. *God so loved the world.* If you ask, *How?* judge from this instance, words cannot express it. He so loved sinners, enemies, rebels, that for their sakes he abandoned and delivered up his beloved Son into the hands of wicked men, permitted him to be assaulted by the powers of darkness; yea, it pleased the Father himself to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. This is love without parallel, and beyond conception. We can only admire, and say, "Behold "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed "on us†." When Jesus Christ as crucified is clearly apprehended by faith, then we have the most convincing, the most affecting proof, that God is love.

3*dly*, Justice. Wonder not that God's own Son is thus treated. He stands in the place of sinners, and therefore he is not, he cannot be spared. The words his enemies use‡ to his reproach, will, in the lips of his redeemed people, be an expression of his highest praise. Having undertaken to save others, and being determined not to give up their cause, it is in that respect absolutely impossible for him to save himself.

Again, this justice, which was once as a flaming sword to forbid and exclude every hope of salvation to fallen man, is now engaged in our behalf. For since it has pleased the Father to charge sin upon

* Dan. ix. 24. † 1 John, iii. 1. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 42.

on his own Son, his wrath will turn away from all who believe. The immenſe debt is already paid, and juſtice will not exact it twice. From henceforth God is not only gracious and merciful, but* juſt and faithful in the forgiveneſs of ſin, and declares his own righteouſneſs in juſtifying the believer in Jeſus †.

2. The knowledge of God is made known in the perſon of Chriſt, if we contemplate him as *reigning in glory*. He is no longer a man of ſorrows, oppreſſed and deſpiſed. He is now upon the throne. In him the fulneſs of the Godhead dwells, and from him, as light from the ſun, the unſearchable riches of his goodneſs are communicated to indigent, unworthy ſinners. All the divine perfections ſhine gloriouſly in him, as the God-man, the Mediator, who is exalted above all conception and praiſe, and doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

1ſt, Grace. The great God is pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf in Chriſt, as the God of grace. This grace is manifold, pardoning, converting, reſtoring, perſevering grace, beſtowed upon the miſerable and worthleſs. Grace finds the ſinner in a hopeleſs, helpleſs ſtate, ſitting in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death. Grace pardons the guilt, cleanſes the pollution, and ſubdues the power of ſin. Grace ſuſtains the bruiſed reed, binds up the broken heart, and cheriſhes the ſmoking flax into a flame. Grace reſtores the ſoul from wandering, revives it when fainting, heals it when wounded, upholds it when ready to fall, teaches it to fight, goes before it in the battle, and at laſt makes it more than conqueror over all oppoſition, and then beſtows a crown of everlaſting life. But all this grace

* 1 John, i. 9. † Rom. iii. 26.

grace is eſtabliſhed and diſplayed by covenant in the Man Chriſt Jeſus, and without reſpect to him as living, dying, riſing, reigning, and interceding in the behalf of ſinners, would never have been known.

2*dly*, Power. The whole creation proclaims that power belongs unto God. But in nothing will his power be more illuſtriouſly diſplayed than in the wonders of redeeming love! What power is neceſſary to raiſe thoſe who are ſpiritually dead in ſin, to ſoften the heart of ſtone, to bring light out of darkneſs, and order out of confuſion? Wherever his goſpel is faithfully preached, it is always confirmed by this accompanying power How quickly, how eaſily, did he change Saul from a perſecutor to an apoſtle? Again, how is his power illuſtrated by the care he takes of all who believe in his name, affording to every one of them ſeaſonable, ſuitable, and ſufficient ſupplies in every time of need? So that his weak, helpleſs, and oppoſed people, are ſupported, ſtrengthened, and enabled, to hold on, and to hold out, againſt all the united efforts of the world, ſin, and Satan.

3*dly*, Bounty. How glorious is Jeſus in his kingdom? Exalted beyond all conception and praiſe; wearing upon his veſture, and upon his thigh, the name that is above every name; and having all thrones, principalities, and powers, obedient to his will, and adoring at his feet. But all his riches and honours (ſo far as their capacities can receive) he condeſcends to ſhare with his people. He owns their worthleſs names, he permits them to claim the moſt tender relation to him, and to call him their brother, their friend, and their huſband. Yea, he ſays concerning them, "To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me in my throne, "even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with

" my Father in his throne *." To him therefore we must look for the most astonishing and affecting display of the divine bounty.

Thus the knowledge of God is revealed in the person of Christ by the word. But great and important as these truths are, we cannot receive and understand them merely by reading. The Lord Jesus therefore has favoured his church with a farther revelation. That is,

II. By his Spirit. This was one principal fruit of his ascension and intercession †. With the promise of his Spirit he cheered his disciples when sorrowing under the apprehension of his departure: " It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I " go not away, the Comforter will not come to " you; but if I depart, I will send him unto " you ‡." The offices of the Holy Spirit are various as our wants; he teaches, comforts, sanctifies, and seals the children of God; but he affects all these benefits by revealing the knowledge of God, as manifested in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

1. In convincing sinners of their lost estate, which is absolutely necessary to their deliverance. None will prize the Saviour but those who feel their need of him. Two things are necessary to convince a man of his lost condition by nature and practice as a sinner;—the spirituality of the law, and the sufferings of Christ: the one shews the universality of sin, the other its demerit. But these can only be truly discerned by the light of the Spirit of Christ. While St Paul (who was never absolutely without the law) was ignorant of the law's spirituality, " I was (says he) alive ||." I had so little knowledge, both of the law and of myself, that I trusted to it for righteousness, and vainly

* Rev. iii. 21. † Acts, ii. 33. ‡ John, xvi. 7.
|| Rom. vii. 9.

vainly thought that I yielded it obedience, and grounded my hopes of salvation thereon. "But "when the commandment came," when the Spirit explained and enforced it in its full extent, as reaching to the very thoughts of the heart, and requiring an obedience absolutely perfect, "then "sin revived, and I died." All my hopes vanished, I saw every principle, affection, and action, polluted, and the corruptions which I supposed were tamed, broke forth with redoubled vigour. Again, though sin is declared to be displeasing to God, and destructive to man, by all the evils and miseries with which the word is filled, and all the punishments which the righteous Judge of all the earth has inflicted on the account of it; yet the just demerit of sin is not to be learnt by the destruction of Sodom or of the old world, but only from the sufferings of Christ, who has bore the curse for sinners. Nor is it sufficient to know historically that he did suffer, and how he suffered. Where these things are not known by the light of the Spirit, they are no more regarded than a worn-out tale. But where the Spirit of Christ reveals by the word, the nature, cause, and end of his sufferings, then sin appears exceedingly sinful. Nothing less than this can make the soul abhor it.

2. The Spirit produces faith in Jesus, as having once suffered, and now mighty to save. His blood, his righteousness, his intercession, compassion, and power, are presented to the soul in a light which bears down the objections of guilt, unbelief, and Satan. Then the wounds made by sin are healed. Then old things pass away, all things become new, all difficulties are solved, and God is revealed experimentally to the soul, as holy, righteous, and true, in justifying the believer in Jesus.

3. Those whom the Spirit thus comforts, he also

ſo ſeals *. He impreſſes the image of Chriſt upon them. Such is the power of the views he gives them of his glory, that they are transformed into the reſemblance of their Lord †. Though the firſt traces of this delineation are faint and indiſtinct in the ſight of men, yet they are perfect *in kind*. The Spirit impreſſes feature for feature, and grace for grace ‡; and the chief thing he deſigns and effects by all his ſubſequent diſpenſations while the ſoul remains in the body, is to heighten and finiſh the heavenly ſignature. Together with this, and in the ſame degree, he ſeals and ratifies to their conſciences an intereſt in all the promiſes of the goſpel; and by infuſing into their hearts the temper of children, he gives them confidence at the throne of grace, enables them to cry, Abba, Father, and bears witneſs with their ſpirits that they are born of God. Thus God is revealed not only to them, but in them; and they are made conformable to him in whom they believe, in all righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and truth.

LET me once more addreſs,

1. Poor mourning ſouls. Are you ſeeking to Jeſus? you have good reaſon; you ſee he is a mighty Saviour. He is furniſhed with full authority, and came expreſsly on purpoſe to ſave ſuch as you. He aſſures you, that none ſhall ſincerely ſeek him in vain. Believe his word, and diſmiſs your fears. He has begun his good work, by revealing to you your miſery, danger, and helpleſſneſs, by leading your thoughts to himſelf He will not ſtop here; he will in due time accompliſh his whole commiſſion, by revealing to you that knowledge of God in which ſtandeth your preſent peace and eternal life.

2.

* Epheſ. i. 13. † 2 Cor. iii. 18. ‡ John, i. 16.

2. Careleſs ſinners. How greatly will your guilt be aggravated if you receive this grace of God, the goſpel of ſalvation, in vain? Do not your hearts tremble when you think of meeting the Lord Jeſus in glory? Have you an anſwer ready, when he ſhall aſk you why you refuſed his inſtruction, and caſt his words behind you? The light of truth has viſited you, how long will you reſiſt it? How long will Satan blind your eyes? To thoſe who accept not his revelation of grace, he will be ere long revealed in flaming fire. O humble yourſelves before him, while the hope of mercy is yet afforded; and pray for the Spirit we have been ſpeaking of, that you may be recovered out of the ſnare of the devil, and made partakers of the knowledge and image of God.

3. Believers. This ſubject is the food of your ſouls. You remember when you had dark, hard, and uncomfortable thoughts of God; but you have ſeen his glory in the perſon of Chriſt, you have received not the ſpirit of the world, but the Spirit of God *, that you may know the things that are freely given you of God. You were once darkneſs, but now you are light in the Lord †. Walk then as children of the light; remember your calling, your privileges, your obligations, your engagements. Let theſe all animate you to preſs forward, to endure the croſs, to deſpiſe the ſhame. Let it not grieve you to ſuffer with Chriſt here, for hereafter you ſhall reign with him. The hour is ſwiftly approaching, when you ſhall be out of the reach of changes and ſorrow for ever. Then "thy "ſun ſhall no more go down; neither ſhall thy "moon withdraw itſelf: for the Lord ſhall be thine "everlaſting light, and the days of thy mourning "ſhall be ended ‡."

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* 1 Cor. ii. 12. † Eph. v. 8. ‡ Iſ. lx. 20.

SERMON IX.

LABOURING AND HEAVY-LADEN SINNERS DESCRIBED.

MATTH. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

WE read that when David was withdrawn into the wilderneſs from the rage of Saul, every one that was in diſtreſs, or in debt, or diſcontented, gathered themſelves unto him, and he became their captain *. This was a ſmall honour to the judgement of Saul and his court, to be the head of a company of fugitives. Thoſe who judge by outward appearances, and are governed by the maxims of worldly wiſdom, cannot have much more honourable thoughts of the preſent ſtate of Chriſt's myſtical kingdom and ſubjects upon earth. The caſe of David was looked upon as deſperate by thoſe who, like Nabal †, lived at their eaſe. They did not know, or would not believe, the promiſe of God, that he ſhould be king over Iſrael, and therefore they preferred the favour of Saul, whom God had rejected. In like manner, though our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was a divine perſon, inveſted with all authority, grace, and bleſſing, and declared the purpoſe of God concerning himſelf, and all who ſhould obey his voice, that he would be their King, and they ſhould be his happy people; yet the moſt that heard him ſaw no excellence in him, or need of him; their portion and their hearts were in this world.

* 1 Sam. xxii. 2. † 1 Sam. xxv. 10.

world, therefore they rejected him, and treated him as a blasphemer and a madman. A few, however, there were who felt their misery, and desired to venture upon his word. To these he gave the freest invitation. Those who accepted it, found his promise made good, and rejoiced in his light. Thus it is still; he is no longer upon earth to call us; but he has left these gracious words for an encouragement to all who need a Saviour. The greatest part of mankind, even in Christian countries, are too happy, or too busy to regard him. They think they deserve some commendation, if they do not openly mock his messengers, disdain his message, and offer abuse to all who would press them to-day, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice. Even this treatment his servants must expect from many. But there are a few, like David's men, distressed in conscience, deeply in debt to the law of God, and discontented with the bondage of sin, who see and believe that He, and He only, is able to save them. To these labouring and heavy-laden souls, he still says, "Come unto "me, and I will give you rest." May his gracious Spirit put life and power into his own words, and into what he shall enable me to speak from them, that they may at this time receive a blessing and peace from his hands.

The text readily points out three inquiries.

1. Who are the persons here invited?
2. What is it to come to Christ?
3. What is implied in the promised rest?

I. The persons are those who labour (the Greek expresses toil with weariness *) and are heavy laden. This must, however, be limited to spiritual concerns,

* Compare Luke, v. 5. John, iv. 6. where the original word is the same.

concerns, otherwiſe it will take in all mankind, even the moſt hardened and obſtinate oppoſers of Chriſt and the goſpel. For let your conſciences ſpeak, you that account the yoke of Chriſt a heavy burden, and judge his people to be miſerable and melancholy, are not you wearied and burdened in your own way? Surely you are often tired of your drudgery. Though you are ſo wedded and ſold to your hard maſter, that you cannot break looſe; though you are ſo mad as to be fond of your chains; yet you know, and I know, (for I remember the gall and wormwood of that ſtate), that you do not find all that pleaſure in your wickedneſs which you pretend to. So much as you affect to deſpiſe hypocriſy, you are great hypocrites yourſelves. You often laugh when you are not pleaſed, you roar out your boiſterous mirth ſometimes, when you are almoſt ready to roar with anguiſh and diſquiet of ſpirit. You court the friendſhip of thoſe whom in your heart you deſpiſe; and though you would be thought to pay no regard at all to the word of God, there are ſeaſons when (like him you ſerve) you believe and tremble. And, farther, what viſible burdens do you bring upon yourſelves? "The way of tranſ-"greſſors is hard*." Your follies multiply your troubles every day. Confuſion and uneaſineſs in your families, waſte of ſubſtance, loſs of health and reputation, diſcord, ſtrife, ſorrow, and ſhame; theſe are the bitter fruits of your evil ways, which prey on your preſent hours, and make your future proſpects darker every day. Surely you are weary and heavy laden beyond expreſſion.

But this is not the caſe with others. You avoid groſs vices, you have perhaps a form of godlineſs. The worſt, you think, that can be ſaid of you is, that

* Prov. xiii. 15.

that you employ all your thoughts, and every means that will not bring you under the lash of the law, to heap up money, to join house to house, and field to held; or you spend your days in a thoughtless indolence, walk in the way of your own hearts, and look no farther: and here you will say you find pleasure, and insist on it, that you are neither weary nor heavy laden. I might enlarge on your many disappointments, the vain fears which are inseparable from those who live without God in the world, and the trouble we find from disorderly, restless, and unsatisfied passions. But, to wave these things, I say briefly, that if you are not labouring and heavy laden, then it is plain that you are not the persons whom Christ here invites to partake of his rest. And though you can rest without him now, think, O think, what rest you will find without him hereafter! If you now say, Depart, he will then say, Depart. And who will smile upon you when he frowns? To whom will you then flee for help? or where will you leave your glory? O that it would please him to touch your hearts, that, as weary and heavy-laden sinners, you might fall humbly at his feet, before his wrath burn like fire, and there be none to quench it!

But to proceed; Let us,

1. Explain the terms, what it is to *labour* and be *heavy laden*.

2. Shew who are the persons that answer this description.

First, the persons are said to be,

1. Labouring, toiling, weary. This is not hard to be understood. Weariness proceeds either from labour or from weakness; and when these are united, when a person has much to do, or to bear, and but little strength, he will soon be weary. The case of some, however, is, that when they are tired, they can lay down their burden, or leave off their

their work. But these are not only labouring, fainting, weary, but,

2. Heavy-laden likewise. As if a man had a burden which he was unable to bear a single minute, so fastened upon him, that he could not by any means be freed from it; but it must always press him down, night and day, abroad or at home, sleeping (if sleep in such a circumstance was possible) and waking. How would the poor creature be wearied! How could you comfort or give him ease, unless you could rid him of his burden? How desirable would the prospect of liberty be to such a one! and how great his obligations and acknowledgements to his deliverer!

Secondly, This representation is an emblem of the distresses and burdens of those who seek to Jesus, that they may have rest in their souls; nor can any truly seek him till they feel themselves in such a state. They may be generally comprised under three classes.

1. Awakened sinners. None but those who have felt it can conceive how sinners labour, toil, and faint, under their first convictions. They are burdened,

1*st*, With the guilt of sin. This is a heavy load. When Jesus bore it, it made him sweat great drops of blood. It is true, he bore the weight of all his people's sins; but the weight of one sin is sufficient to press us down, if God permits it to lie heavy upon us. I suppose the best of us can remember some action or incident or other in our past lives which we would wish to forget if we could. Now, how would you be distressed to have a person sounding in your ears, from morning till night, and every day of your lives, that worst thing that ever you did? Would it not weary you? This is a faint image of the convinced sinner's state. When conscience is truly awakened, it acts this officious

ficious and troublesome part; but its remonstrances are not confined to one sin, it renews the remembrance and the aggravations of multitudes. Nor is this the voice of a man, but indeed of God, who speaks in and by the conscience. The poor sinner hears and trembles: then the complaint of Job is understood: "Thou writest bitter things "against me, and makest me to possess the iniqui- "ties of my youth *." Do you wonder that such a one can no longer take pleasure in worldly things? It is impossible, unless you could silence this importunate voice, that they can bear themselves at all. Nay, often it is so strong and urgent, gives them such a lively sense of what sin is, and what it deserves from a righteous God, that they are almost afraid or ashamed to see any person that knows them. They are ready to think, that people can read in their faces what passes in their hearts, and almost expect that the ground should open under their feet. O how wearisome is it to be continually bowed down with such a burden as this!

2*dly*, With the power of sin. Perhaps they were once in some measure at ease in this respect; they saw others whom they supposed to be worse; and therefore trusted in themselves that they were righteous. But convictions rouse and inflame our sinful natures. St Paul exemplifies this by his own case before conversion: "I was alive without the law "once; but when the commandment came, sin "revived, and I died †." He never was strictly without the law, for he expected salvation by obeying it; but he was without the knowledge of its spirituality, demands, and sanction: and while he remained thus, he was alive, that is, his hope remained

* Job, xiii. 26. † Rom. vii. 9.

mained good, and he was satisfied with his obedience. But when the commandment came, when its extent, purity, and penalty, were brought home to his conscience, sin revived, and he died. He found all his pretensions to liberty, obedience, and comfort, were experimentally confuted by what he felt in himself. The more an awakened sinner strives against his corruptions, the more they seem to increase. This wearies him; for, besides the greatness of the toil itself, he finds himself weak, weak as water, weaker and weaker. And he is not only weary, but heavy laden; for this likewise is a burden which he cannot shake off. He sees that he cannot succeed; yet he dares not desist.

2. Those who are seeking salvation by the works of the law, are labouring, and heavy laden, engaged in what is beyond their strength, and baffles all their endeavours. This may appear from what has been already said. It is a hard task to keep the whole law; and nothing else will either please God, if made the ground of justification, or satisfy the conscience that has any true light. Those declarations of the word, that "cursed is the man who "continueth not in all things written in the book of "the law to do them*," and, "whoso keepeth the "whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he "is guilty of all†," keep them in continual anxiety and servitude. The wickedness of their flesh makes it impossible for the law to give a ground of hope; yet they cannot lay down their burden, but are compelled to renew the fruitless task. I speak not of mere formalists, who go through a round of external services, without meaning or design; but all who are in a measure sincere, find themselves still followed with a restless inquiry, "What lack I "yet?

* Gal. iii. 10. † James, ii. 10.

" yet* ?" Endleſs are the ſhifts and contrivances they are put to; but all in vain: for, what makes it worſe, they always add to this burden many inventions of their own, as though the demands of the law were too few.

3. Thoſe who are under temptation. It is a hard and wearifome ſervice to be in cloſe conflict with the powers of darkneſs. The leading branches of this exerciſe are,

1*st*, When the ſoul is aſſaulted, and as it were filled with inſufferable blaſphemies. When Satan is permitted to ſhoot theſe fiery darts, none can expreſs (not even thoſe who have felt them) the amazement and confuſion that fills the mind. For a perſon who has received a reverence for the name and attributes of God, to be haunted from morning to night, from day to day, with horrid imprecations, ſo ſtrongly impreſſed, that he often ſtarts and trembles with an apprehenſion, that he has certainly conſented, and ſpoken them aloud with his lips; this is irkſome and terrifying beyond deſcription.

2*dly*, When the foundations of faith and experience are attacked. Many who have thought themſelves grounded in the truth, who have hoped that they had ſurely taſted that the Lord is gracious, and have in their firſt comforts been ready to ſay, " I ſhall never be moved†, thou, Lord, " of thy goodneſs haſt made my mountain ſo " ſtrong," have found themſelves afterwards at their wits end, when the enemy has been permitted to come in upon them like a flood ‡. One black cloud of temptation has blotted out all their comfortable evidences; and they have been left to queſtion, not only the juſtneſs of their own hopes, but even

* Matth. xix. 25. † Pſal. xxx. 6. ‡ Iſa. lix. 19.

even the firſt and moſt important principles on which their hopes were built.

3dly, When the hidden corruptions and abominations of the heart are ſtirred up. And perhaps there is no other way but this of coming to the knowledge of what our depraved natures are capable. Such things a ſeaſon of temptation has diſcovered to ſome, which I believe no rack nor tortures could conſtrain them to diſcloſe, though but to their deareſt friend. This ſubject, therefore, will not bear a particular illuſtration. The Lord's people are not all acquainted with theſe depths of Satan. As people who live on ſhore have a variety of trials, dangers, and deliverances, yet know but little of the peculiar exerciſes of thoſe who go down to the ſea in ſhips; ſo, in the preſent caſe, there are great waters *, depths of temptation, known comparatively to few. Thoſe who are brought through them, have more to ſay of the wonders of God in the great deep than others; and this is his deſign in permitting it, that they may know more of him, and more of themſelves. But while they are under theſe trials, they are weary and heavy laden; and this burden they muſt bear till the Lord removes it. The help of men, books, and ordinances, is fought and tendered in vain, till his appointed hour of deliverance draws near.

Theſe, therefore, convincing, ſtriving, and tempted ſouls, are the perſons to whom Jeſus ſays, "Come to me, and I will give you reſt." The purport of this gracious invitation we are to conſider hereafter. In the mean time rejoice in this, Jeſus has foreſeen your caſes, and provided accordingly. He ſays, *Come;* that is, *believe*, as he himſelf expounds it: "He that cometh unto me, ſhall never

* Pſal. cvii. 24.

" never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall " never thirst *." See how his promises suit the state you are in.

1. Are you heavy laden with guilt? The gospel-message is, " The blood of Jesus Christ his Son " cleanseth us from all sin †."

2. Are you groaning under the power of indwelling sin? Hear his gracious words: " I am " the resurrection and the life: he that believeth " in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ‡." And to the same purpose his prophet: " He giveth " power to the faint; and to them that have no " might, he increaseth strength ||."

3. Are you striving in the fire to keep the law? " Wherefore will you spend your money for that " which is not bread, and your labour for that " which satisfieth not?" Forego the vain attempt. Is it not written, " Christ is the end of the law for " righteousness to every one that believeth **?"

4. Are you in temptation? He that says, " Come unto me," has been tempted himself ††, and knows how to pity you. He has power over your enemy, and can deliver you with a word ‡‡. Did he not thus dispossess Satan in the days of his humiliation? and if *then*, surely he is no less able *now*; for since that time he has gloriously triumphed over the powers of darkness |||. And as his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy; he has said, without exception, " Whosoever cometh " unto me, I will in no wise cast out ++;" and thousands who have been in yur distress, have successively found that promise fulfilled: " The " God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet " shortly ++."

* John, vi. 35. † 1 John, i. 7. ‡ John, xi. 25.
|| Isa. xl. 29. ** Rom. x. 4. †† Heb. ii. 18.
‡‡ Mark, i. 27. ||| Col. ii. 15. ++ John, vi. 37.
++ Rom. xvi. 20.; Zech. iii. 2.

SERMON X.

OF COMING TO CHRIST.

MATTH. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE diſpenſation of the goſpel may be compared to the cities of refuge in Iſrael. It was a privilege, an honour to the nation in general, that they had ſuch ſanctuaries of divine appointment; but the real value of them was known to few. Thoſe only who found themſelves in that caſe for which they were provided could rightly prize them. In like manner, the goſpel of Chriſt is the higheſt privilege and honour of which a profeſſing nation can boaſt; but it can be truly eſteemed and underſtood by none but weary and heavy-laden ſouls, who have felt their miſery by nature, are tired of the drudgery of ſin, and have ſeen the curſe of the broken law purſuing them, like the avenger of blood of old. This is the only conſideration that keeps them from deſpair, that God has provided a remedy by the goſpel; and Jeſus has ſaid, "Come "unto me, and I will give you reſt." If they could receive the full comfort of theſe words, and heartily obey the call, their complaints would be at an end; but remaining ignorance, unbelief, and Satan, combine in various ways to keep them back. Some will ſay, "O that I could come! but, alas! "I cannot." Others, "I fear I do not come a-"right."——Having, therefore, endeavoured to ſhew you the perſons chiefly intended here under the

the character of those who labour and are heavy laden, I proceed to consider,

II. What it is to come to Christ. I have observed in general, that it appears to have the same signification with *believing* in him. But that we may understand it the more clearly, let us inquire,

1. How those to whom he personally spoke these words, in all probability, understood them?

2. How far their apprehensions of them are applicable and suitable to our circumstances?

3. Whether, as we have the same necessity, we have not likewise equal encouragement to come to him with those who were conversant with him upon earth?

1. It does not appear, that those to whom our Lord spoke in person, were so much perplexed as many are now, to know what *coming* or *believing* should mean; he seems to have been understood * both by friends and enemies. Many questioned his authority and right to exact a dependence on himself; but they seemed to be at no difficulty about his meaning. It certainly implied more than a mere bodily coming into his presence. He was surrounded, and even followed, by multitudes, who never came to him in the sense of his invitation. To such, while standing about him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye "may have life †." Therefore, if we consult what is written of those who came to Jesus for relief, and obtained it, we may conclude, that coming to him implies,

1st, A persuasion of his power, and of their own need of his help. They knew that they wanted relief, and conceived of him as an extraordi-

* John, vi. 30. and xix. 36. † John, v. 40.

nary perſon, impowered and able to ſuccour them. This perſuaſion of Chriſt's ſufficiency and willingneſs was then, as it is now, afforded in different degrees. The centurion ſpoke with full aſſurance; "Speak the word only, and my ſervant ſhall be healed *." The leper more dubiouſly: "Lord, "if thou wilt, thou canſt make me clean †." Another, in ſtill fainter language: "If thou canſt "do any thing, have compaſſion, and help us ‡." The faith of this laſt was, as the man himſelf acknowledged, mixed with much unbelief and fear; yet Jeſus did not deſpiſe the day of ſmall things; he pardoned his ſuſpicions, confirmed his fluctuating mind, granted him his requeſt; and his caſe is recorded as an inſtance how graciouſly he accepts and cheriſhes the feebleſt effects of true faith: "He "will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the "ſmoking flax."

2*dly*, An actual application. This evidenced their faith to be right. They did not ſit content with having heard of him, but improved it: they went to him, told him their caſes, and implored his compaſſion. Their faith prevailed againſt all diſcouragements. In vain the multitude charged them to hold their peace ‖; knowing that he only was able to relieve them, they cried ſo much the more a great deal. Even when he ſeemed to diſcover a great reſerve **, they ſtill waited, and knew not how to depart without an anſwer. Nor could a ſenſe of unworthineſs, fear, or ſhame, keep them back ††, when once they had a ſtrong perſuaſion of his power to ſave.

3*dly*, When he was ſought to as a ſoul-phyſician, as was the caſe with many whoſe bodily diſeaſes he healed,

* Matth. viii. 8. † Matth. viii. 2. ‡ Mark, ix. 22.
‖ Mark, x. 48. ** Matth. xv. 27. †† Mark, v. 27.

healed, and with others who were not ſick, thoſe who came to him, continued with him, and became his followers. They depended on him for ſalvation, received him as their Lord and Maſter, profeſſed an obedience to his precepts, accepted a ſhare in his reproach, and renounced every thing that was inconſiſtent with his will *. Some had a more expreſs and open call to this, as Matthew, who was ſitting at the receipt of cuſtom, regardleſs of Jeſus, till he paſſed by him, and ſaid, "Follow me †." That word, accompanied with the power of his love, won his heart, and diverted him from worldly purſuits in an inſtant. Others were more ſecretly drawn by his Spirit and providence, as Nathaniel, and the weeping penitent ‡ who ſilently waſhed his feet with her tears; and this was the deſign and effect of many of their bodily and family afflictions. The man who was brought to be healed of the palſy ||, received the forgiveneſs of his ſins; and the ruler, who firſt came to Jeſus with no other view than to obtain the life of his ſon **, obtained much more than he aſked or expected. The Lord afforded ſuch an affecting ſenſe of his power and goodneſs upon that occaſion, that he from henceforth believed, with all his houſe.

2. Theſe things are applicable to us. Jeſus is no longer viſible upon earth; but he has promiſed his ſpiritual preſence to abide with his word, ordinances, and people, to the end of time. Weary and heavy-laden ſouls have now no need to take a long journey to ſeek him; for he is always near them, and in a ſpiritual manner, where his goſpel is preached. Poor and inconſiderable as we are in the judgement of the world, I truſt we have a right

* Luke, ix. 23. 60.
† Matth. ix. 9.
‡ John, i. 48.; Luke, vii. 38.
|| Mark, ii. 5.
** John, iv. 53.

to claim his promise *, and to believe that he is even now in the midst of us. Therefore come unto him; that is,

1st, Raise your hearts, and breathe forth your complaints to him. Do you see your need of him? Be persuaded, and pray to him to assure you more strongly of his power and goodness. He is just such a Saviour as your circumstances require, as you yourself could wish for; and he is able to convince you in a moment that he is so. If he is pleased to cause a ray of his glory to break in upon your mind, your fears, and doubts, and griefs, would instantly give place.

2dly, Persevere in this application to him. Set a high value upon these his public ordinances, and be constant in attending them. His eye is fixed upon us; his arm is revealed amongst us. I trust it is a time of his grace, and that every day we meet, he does something for one or another in the assembly. He has a fixed time for every one whom he relieves. He knew how long the poor man had waited at the pool-side †; and when his hour came, he spake and relieved him. So do you endeavour to be found in his way; and not here only, but in whatever he has made your duty. Read his word; be frequent in secret prayer. You will find many things arising from within and without to discourage and weary you in this course; but persist in it, and in good time you shall find rest for your souls. These are the means which the Lord has appointed you. Converse likewise at proper opportunities with his people; perhaps he may unexpectedly join you, as he did the two disciples when walking to Emmaus ‡, and cause your hearts to burn within you. Farther,

3dly,

* Matth. xviii. 20. † John, v. 6. ‡ Luke, xxiv. 32.

3*dly*, You are to follow him, to take up his croſs, to make a profeſſion of his name and goſpel, to bear contentedly a ſhare in the reproach and ſcorn which is the uſual lot of thoſe who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, in the midſt of an unbelieving and perverſe generation. You are not only to truſt in him as a prieſt to atone for your ſins, but to receive and obey him as your teacher and your Lord. If you are truly weary and heavy laden, you will be glad to do this, and are crying to him to enable you: and you are likewiſe willing to forſake every thing that is inconſiſtent with his will and ſervice. If you are deſirous to come to Chriſt, it is not grievous to you to think of parting with your ſinful pleaſures and vain companions. Rather theſe are a part of the burden from which you long to be freed.

Come in this way, and you ſhall find reſt for your ſouls. Are any of you thinking,—O that I could!—Surely if I had ſeen him and heard him, I ſhould have ventured. But now unbelief and fear keep me back. I obſerve, therefore,

3. That as we have no leſs need of Jeſus than thoſe of old who ſaw and converſed with him; ſo we have at leaſt equal encouragement to come unto him. This I think will appear, if we conſider that,

On the one hand, the bodily preſence of Chriſt, conſidered in itſelf, had no peculiar or extraordinary influence upon thoſe who ſaw him, but all was wrought by the power of his Spirit; the ſame Spirit which is promiſed to abide with his church for ever.

1*st*, Multitudes who ſaw and heard him were unmoved and unconvinced by all the wonders of his love. Though he ſpoke as never man ſpoke, and went about doing good, he was ſlighted, oppoſed, and hated even to the death. And thoſe who

know the heart of man, and believe that the carnal mind is enmity againſt God, will allow it highly probable, that upon a ſuppoſition he ſhould appear again in the ſame circumſtances of humiliation, and to uſe the ſame authoritative freedom in vindicating the commands of God from the vain figments, traditions, and cuſtoms of men, he would meet with little better treatment, even in thoſe countries which are called by his name, than he did from the proud, ſelf-righteous, unbelieving Jews. We may warrantably ſuppoſe there were many more lepers, blind, &c. in the places where he reſorted, than thoſe who came to him to be healed.

2*dly*, Many of his profeſſed diſciples, even after they had followed him for a while, turned back and forſook him *. We have therefore the leſs reaſon to wonder when we ſee any give up the profeſſion of the goſpel, and return to the world again. It was thus from the beginning; and thoſe who do ſo now, would have done ſo if they had lived then. His looks, his voice, his geſture, and even his diſcourſes and miracles, could not engage a ſingle perſon to cleave to him with full purpoſe of heart, unleſs he was likewiſe ſpiritually revealed to the eye of their faith, as the image of the inviſible God, the brightneſs of the Father's glory, full of grace and truth.

3*dly*, Even his true diſciples, who were conſtantly with him, to whom he had perſonally made the moſt expreſs and endearing promiſes, and who ſometimes thought themſelves aſſured beyond the power of a doubt, yet could not maintain their confidence longer than his Spirit upheld them. To them expreſsly, though not to them excluſively, Jeſus had ſaid, "I go to prepare a place for you †," and I will come again to receive you to myſelf, that

* John, vi. 66. † John, xiv. 2.

that "where I am, there ye may be alſo*." When he had concluded that affectionate diſcourſe, their doubts and fears were diſſipated, and they could confidently ſay, "Now we believe†;" yet it was not long before they found his reply fulfilled. Jeſus ſaid unto them, "Do you now believe? The hour "is coming, when you ſhall be ſcattered every "man to his own, and ſhall leave me alone‡." Will not this inſtance convince you of your miſtake, when you think you could depend more on a voice from heaven, than on the written word? The apoſtles had the ſtrongeſt ground of aſſurance imaginable, the word of the Lord Jeſus himſelf, face to face; and yet this would not ſupport them, without renewed ſupplies of ſtrength.

On the other hand, conſider if the loſs of his bodily preſence is not more than made up to us.

1*ſt*, By the fuller manifeſtation of the Holy Spirit than was afforded before his aſcenſion. The Holy Ghoſt was not then given in that clear and abundant meaſure as afterwards ||, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified. While he was with them, he was their Comforter and Teacher; but he told them, "When I depart, I will ſend you another "Comforter **," whoſe office and abode with you will be in many reſpects ſo much more advantageous, that on this account it is expedient for you that I go away.

2*dly*, By the greater number and variety of promiſes which we enjoy. We have not only the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament in common with them, but to us the ancient revelations of the will and love of God are enlarged, explained, applied, and confirmed by the ſuperaddition of the new ††.

* John, xiv. 3. † John, xvi. 30. ‡ John, xvi. 32.
|| John, vii. 39. ** John, xiv. 16. and xvi. 7.
†† Epheſ. iii. 5.

3*dly*, By the experience of multitudes of all ages, people, and languages, who have gone before us, ſince their time, the cloud of witneſſes to the truth and grace of God, the reality of eternal things, and the victorious power of faith, is now increaſed by the concurrent evidence of thouſands and millions, who have overcome all oppoſition by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his teſtimony.

4*thly*, By the proofs and living witneſſes of his power and grace amongſt ourſelves. Are there not many with whom you worſhip and converſe from day to day, who can tell you, they were even dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, but he has quickened them? They were once as you are, labouring and heavy laden; they waited for him long, had a ſhare in ſuch temptations and conflicts as you now feel, were often at a ſtand, and upon the point of concluding their caſe to be deſperate, as you may think yours at preſent; but at length they were enabled to come unto him, and they have found reſt. Every ſuch inſtance ſhould encourage you to gird up the loins of your minds; to be patient, and hope to the end. As they have known your troubles, ſo ſhall you partake of their conſolations in due time. What is it then ſhould hinder you from coming to Jeſus, that you may find reſt? What exceptions can your unbelief deviſe againſt the invitations, motives, and examples, which the Lord ſets before you by his preached goſpel?

(1.) It is a ſenſe of your load which makes you ſay you are not able? But conſider that this is not a *work*, but a *reſt*. Would a man plead, I am ſo heavy laden, that I cannot conſent to part with my burden; ſo weary, that I am not able either to ſtand ſtill or lie down, but muſt force myſelf farther? The greatneſs of your burden, ſo far from being an objection, is the very reaſon why you ſhould

ſhould inſtantly come to Chriſt, for he alone is able to releaſe you.

(2.) But perhaps you think you do not come aright. I aſk, how would you come? If you can come as a helpleſs unworthy ſinner, without ſtrength, without righteouſneſs, without any hope but what ariſes from the worth, work, and word of Chriſt, this is to come aright. There is no other way of being accepted. Would you refreſh and ſtrengthen yourſelf, waſh away your own ſins, free yourſelf from your burden, and then come to him to do theſe things for you? May the Lord help you to ſee the folly and unreaſonableneſs of your unbelief!

I have obſerved already, that coming to Chriſt ſignified more at firſt than merely to come into his preſence: ſo likewiſe it means more now than to be found among his worſhippers. Let none of you be deceived with a form of godlineſs. Examine your religious profeſſion by this teſt. Have you laboured under a ſenſe of your miſery? Have you known the burden of ſin? Has Jeſus given you reſt? Or are you earneſtly ſeeking to him for it? If you underſtand not the meaning of theſe queſtions, you are not yet in that ſtate to which the promiſes are made. And why are you not labouring and heavy laden? Are you not ſinners? Has not the righteous God revealed a law? Has he not guarded this law with the ſanction of a dreadful curſe? Have you not tranſgreſſed this holy law in thought, word, and deed, times without number? If you have not, why do you join in the public confeſſion, and call for mercy when the commandments are repeated? If you have, how will you eſcape the penalty? How indeed, if you dare to neglect this great ſalvation? The law condemns you already; if you receive not the goſpel, you muſt periſh without remedy: for other name or means whereby

men can be saved there is none under heaven. Once more you are warned of danger; once more the refuge is set before you. We preach Jesus, who came to seek and to save those who were lost; Jesus who was wounded with whips, and thorns, and nails, that his enemies might be healed. Does not this thought affect you? Will you slight his love, despise his blood, and crucify him afresh? God forbid. Is there not some heart now relenting, beginning to feel impressions of fear, shame, and grief? Happy beginning! Obey the voice of God now opening in your conscience! Now is the time to pray; before you knew not what to pray for: but now you see you want the blood of Christ, and the teaching of his Spirit. "Ask, and you "shall receive; and seek, and you shall find." Take your warrant from my text; Jesus has said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Let your hearts answer, "Take away our iniquity, and "receive us graciously: Behold, we come unto "thee, for thou art the Lord our God; and in "thee the fatherless, the helpless, the comfortless, "find mercy."

SER.

SERMON XI.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE REST OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

MATTH. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE learned have a variety of arguments whereby to prove the ſcripture to be the word of God. But though that kind of proof, which may be brought in a way of reaſoning and external evidence, is doubtleſs uſeful upon proper occaſions; yet I apprehend the chief and moſt ſatisfactory argument to thoſe who are capable of receiving it, ariſes from the correſpondence between the ſubject-matter of the ſcripture and the ſtate of an awakened mind. When the eyes of the underſtanding are opened, we begin to ſee every thing around us to be juſt ſo as the ſcripture has deſcribed them. Then, and not till then, we perceive, that what we read in the Bible concerning the horrid evil of ſin, the vileneſs of our fallen nature, the darkneſs and ignorance of thoſe who know not God, our own emptineſs, and the impoſſibility of finding relief and comfort from creatures, is exactly true. We cannot but apply the words of the woman, and ſay, Come * and ſee a book that has told me all that ever I did, the ground of all my complaints, the true cauſe and nature of all the evil I either ſee, hear, or feel, from day to day. And as we find our

* John, iv. 29.

find our diſeaſe preciſely deſcribed, ſo we perceive a ſuitableneſs in the propoſed remedy. We need a Saviour, and he muſt be a mighty one; but though our wants and ſins, our fears and enemies, are great and numerous, we are convinced that the character of Chriſt is ſufficient to anſwer them all. We need a reſt, a reſt which the world cannot give. Inquire where we will among the creatures, experience brings in the ſame anſwer from all, "It is not in me." This again confirms the word of God, which has forewarned us that we ſhall meet nothing but diſappointment in ſuch purſuits. But there is a ſpiritual reſt ſpoken of which we know to be the very thing we want, and all our remaining ſolicitude is how to attain it. From hence, as I ſaid, we may aſſuredly conclude, that the book which gives us ſuch juſt views of every thing that paſſes, muſt be given by inſpiration from him who is the ſearcher of hearts. This proof is equally plain and concluſive to all capacities that are ſpiritually enlightened, and ſuch only are able to underſtand it. We are now to ſpeak,

III. Of this promiſed reſt. And here two things offer to our conſideration.

1. What this reſt is?

2. How it is obtained?

1. The Greek word ανάπαυσω expreſſes ſomething more than reſt, or a mere relaxation from toil; it denotes refreſhment likewiſe. A perſon weary with long bearing a heavy burden, will need not only to have it removed, but likewiſe he wants food and refreſhment, to reſtore his ſpirits, and to repair his waſted ſtrength. Such is the reſt of the goſpel. It not only puts a period to our fruitleſs labour, but it affords a ſweet reviving cordial. There is not only peace, but joy in believing. Taken at large, we may conſider it as twofold.

1ſt,

1*st*, A preſent reſt. So the apoſtle ſpeaks, "We "who have believed do enter into reſt *."

(1.) The common wearifome purſuit of the world is deſcribed as "ſpending their money for that "which is not bread, and their labour for that "which ſatisfieth not †;" wandering from object to object in queſt of good ‡, but ſtill mortified by inceſſant and repeated diſappointment. We ſhould pity a perſon whom we ſhould ſee ſeeking ſome neceſſary thing day after day, which we knew was impoſſible to be found there. It is, however, the caſe with all till they come to Chriſt. Satisfaction is what they profeſs to aim at, and they turn every ſtone, (as we ſay), try every expedient to meet with it, but in vain. It is only to be found in him. When they come to him, their wiſhes are anſwered. This is exemplified by our Lord in the character of a merchant-man ſeeking goodly pearls ||, who was ſtill upon the inquiry till he had found one pearl of great price. This anſwered and exceeded his deſires: upon the diſcovery of this one, he rejoiced to forego all his former acquiſitions, and to give up every other poſſeſſion on purpoſe that he might obtain it.

(2.) I have ſpoken ſomething concerning the wearifome exerciſe of a conſcience burdened with guilt; but by coming to Jeſus, and believing in him, an end is put to this. When we are enabled to view our ſins as laid upon Chriſt, that thoſe who come are accepted in the Beloved, that there is no more condemnation, but pardon, reconciliation, and adoption, are the ſure privileges of all who truſt in him; O the ſweet calm that immediately takes place in the ſoul! It is ſomething more than deliverance. There is a pleaſure more than anſwerable

* Heb. iv. 3. † Iſa. lv. 2. ‡ Pſal. iv. 6.
|| Matth. xiii. 46.

anſwerable to the former pain, a comfort greater than all the trouble that went before it. Yea, the remembrance of the former bitterneſs greatly enhances the preſent pleaſure. And the ſoul underſtands and experiences the meaning of thoſe ſcriptures: "When the Lord turned the captivity of "Zion, then was our mouth filled with laughter, "and our tongue with ſinging *." "In that day "thou ſhalt ſay, O Lord, I will praiſe thee: "though thou waſt angry with me, thine anger is "turned away, and thou comfortedſt me. Be- "hold, God is my ſalvation: I will truſt, and "not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my "ſtrength and my ſong; he alſo is become my "ſalvation †."

(3.) There is likewiſe a reſt from the power of ſin. In vain is this ſought from reſolutions and endeavours in our own ſtrength. Even after we are ſpiritually diſpoſed, and begin to underſtand the goſpel-ſalvation, it is uſually for a ſeaſon rather a *fight* than a *reſt*. But when we are brought nearer to Chriſt, and taught to live upon him as our ſanctification, deriving all our ſtrength and motives from him by faith, we obtain a comparative reſt in this reſpect alſo. We find hard things become eaſy, and mountains ſink into plains, by his power diſplayed in our behalf. Farther,

(4.) There is a reſt from our own works. The believer is quite delivered from the law as a covenant, and owes it no longer ſervice in that view. His obedience is gracious, chearful, the effect of love; and therefore he is freed from thoſe fears and burdens which once diſturbed him in the way of duty. At firſt there was a ſecret, though unallowed dependance on himſelf. When his frames were lively he was ſtrong, and thought he had ſomething

* Pſal. cxxvi. 1. 2. † Iſa. xii. 1. 2.

something to trust to, but under a change (and changes will happen) he was at his wits end. But there is a *promised*, and therefore an *attainable* rest in this respect; a liberty and power to repose on the finished work and unchangeable word of Christ; to follow him steadily through light and darkness; to glory in him *only* when our frames are brightest; and to trust in him *assuredly* when we are at our lowest ebb.

Such is the *present rest;* in different degrees according to the proportion of faith, and capable of increase even in those who have attained most, so long as we remain in this imperfect state. But there is,

2*dly*, A future rest, besides and beyond all that can be experienced here: "There remaineth yet a "rest for the people of God*." Faint and imperfect are our most enlarged ideas of that glory which shall be revealed. "It does not yet appear "what we shall be†." Who can describe or conceive the happiness of heaven? The most we can clearly understand of it lies in negatives. It will be as unlike as possible to this wilderness of sin and sorrow where we are now confined. Here we are in a warfare, but then we shall enter into perfect rest.

(1) A rest from all sin. There no unclean thing shall defile or disturb us for ever. We shall be free from sin in ourselves. This alone would be worth dying for. Indwelling sin is a burden under which even the redeemed of the Lord must groan, whilst they sojourn in the body; and those who are most spiritual, are most deeply affected with shame, humiliation, and grief, on this account, because they have the clearest views of the holiness

* Heb. iv. 9. † 1 John, iii. 2.

neſs of God, the ſpirituality of the law, the love of Chriſt, and the deceitfulneſs of their own hearts. Therefore the apoſtle Paul, though perhaps in grace and talents, in zeal and uſefulneſs, diſtinguiſhed above all the children of Adam, accounted himſelf the chief of ſinners *, leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints †, and cried out, under the diſparity he felt between what he was and what he would be, "O wretched man that I am! who ſhall de-"liver me from the body of this death ‡?" But we ſhall not carry this burden beyond the grave. The hour of diſſolution ſhall free us from the inbred enemies (the inſeparable concomitants of this frail periſhing nature) which now trouble us, and we ſhall ſee them no more for ever.

Again, we ſhall be free from all the diſpleaſing effects of ſin in others. Our hearts ſhall be no more pained, nor our ears wounded, nor our eyes filled with tears, by thoſe evils which fill the earth. Now, like Lot in Sodom, we are grieved every day with the filthy converſation of the wicked ||. Who that has any love to the Lord Jeſus, any ſpark of true holineſs, any ſenſe of the worth of ſouls in his heart, can ſee what paſſes amongſt us without trembling? How openly, daringly, almoſt univerſally, are the commandments of God broken, his goſpel deſpiſed, his patience abuſed, and his power defied. To be a ſilent ſpectator of theſe things is ſufficiently grievous; but if (as we are in duty bound) we dare to ſtand as witneſſes for God in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, we find the ſpirit of the firſt-born. Cain inſtantly takes fire, and denounces war againſt all who ſhould preſume to ſay, that we ought to obey and fear God rather than men. Invectives and

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Eph. iii. 8. ‡ Rom. vii. 24.
|| 2 Pet. ii. 7.

and ill treatment, are the certain lot of all who openly and conſiſtently appear on the Lord's ſide; and if they eſcape ſtripes and bonds, impriſonment and death, it is to be aſcribed to the reſtraints of Divine Providence, and (as a means in our happy land) to the temper of the laws, and to the clemency of the powers under whom we live. Theſe things often conſtrain the believer to ſay, "O that I had "wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, "and be at reſt *." Let us not be weary or faint in our minds; ere long this wiſh ſhall be anſwered. A glorious reſt awaits you, where ſin and ſinners ſhall have no place, nor the alarms of war be any more heard.

(2.) A reſt from all outward afflictions, which, though neceſſary, and, under the influence of divine grace, profitable, are grievous to bear; but then they will be neceſſary no more. Where there is no ſin, there ſhall be no ſorrow. Then, believers, God "ſhall wipe away all tears from your "eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, nei-"ther ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be "any more pain: for the former things are paſſed "away †."

(3.) A reſt from Satan's temptations. How buſy is this adverſary of God and man! what various arts, what ſurpriſing force, what conſtant aſſiduity, does he employ to enſnare, diſtreſs, and terrify thoſe who by grace have eſcaped from his ſervitude! He ſays, like Pharaoh of old, "I will pur-"ſue, I will overtake, I will deſtroy ‡." He follows them to the laſt ſtage of life, but he can follow them no farther. The moment of their departure out of the body, ſhall place them beyond his reach for ever.

(4.) A

* Pſ. lv. 6. † Rev. xxi. 4. ‡ Exod. xv. 9.

(4.) A reſt from unſatisfied deſires. Here the more we drink, the more we thirſt: but there our higheſt wiſhes ſhall be crowned and exceeded; we ſhall reſt in full communion with him whom we love; we ſhall no more complain of interruptions and imperfections, of an abſent God, and a careleſs heart. Here, when we obtain a little glimpſe of his preſence, when he brings us into his banqueting-houſe, and ſpreads his banner of love over us, how gladly would we remain in ſuch a deſirable frame! How unwilling are we to come out of the mount! But theſe pleaſing ſeaſons are quickly ended, and often give place to ſome ſudden unexpected trial, which robs us of all that ſweetneſs in which we lately rejoiced. But when we aſcend the holy hill of God above, we ſhall come down no more; we ſhall be for ever with the Lord, never offend him, never be ſeparated from him again. We ſhall likewiſe reſt in full * conformity to him. Here we find a mixture of evil in our beſt moments; when we approach neareſt to him, we have the quickeſt ſenſe of our defilement, and how much we fall ſhort in every branch of duty, in every temper of our hearts: but when we ſhall ſee Jeſus as he is, we ſhall be fully transformed into his image, and be perfectly like him.

2. But how is this reſt to be obtained? Bleſſed be God, in that way which alone can render it attainable by ſuch unworthy indigent creatures. If it was to be bought, we have nothing to offer for it; if it was propoſed as a reward of merit, we can do nothing to deſerve it. But Jeſus has ſaid, I will *give* you reſt. Our title to it coſt him dear; he purchaſed it for us with his own blood; but to us it comes freely. Faith in his name puts us in immediate poſſeſſion of the firſt-fruits, the earneſt of

* Pſ. xvii. 15.

of this inheritance; and faith will lead us powerfully and safely through all hindrances and enemies to the full enjoyment of the whole. Faith unites us to Christ; gives us an immediate interest in all the benefits of his life, death, and intercession; opens the way of communication for all needful supplies of grace here, and insures to us the accomplishment of all the Lord has spoken to us of, in a state of glory. "He that believeth shall be "saved *;" saved in defiance of all the opposition of earth and hell; saved, notwithstanding he is in himself unstable as water, weak as a bruised reed, and helpless as infancy. What Jesus will give, none can take away. Only remember that it is a free gift. Receive it thankfully, and rejoice in the Giver. Let him have all the glory of his own undertaking. Renounce every hope and every plea, but his promise and mediation. Commit your souls to him, and then fear nothing. "The eternal "God is your refuge, and underneath are the ever-"lasting arms †." He will fight your battles, heal your wounds, refresh your fainting spirits, guide you by his counsel while here, and at last receive you to himself.

May we not therefore say, Happy are the people that are in such a case! happy they, who have been enabled to accept this gracious invitation, who have already entered upon the rest of grace, and have a well-grounded expectation that they shall rest in glory! Believers, what should you fear, or why complain? Look back to where the Lord found you sleeping in, helpless and hopeless, yet insensible of your danger: look forward to what he has provided for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; a crown of life, a kingdom that cannot be shaken: think

* Mark, xvi. 16. † Deut. xxxiii. 27.

think of the love, the suffering, the glory of him to whom you owe these blessings; and let these considerations animate you to run with patience * and thankfulness the race that is set before you.

Happy likewise are you whose hearts are fixed upon this rest, and this Saviour, though as yet you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The Lord will give you rest. Doubt it not, he cannot deny himself; wait his hour; though he seem to tarry long, yet maintain your confidence in his promise. Redouble your prayers, cry mightily to him, he will not (as perhaps many around you do) rebuke your importunity, and charge you to hold your peace. Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him?

And you who are yet strangers to rest, are thus far happy, that you are still spared, and have the gospel continued to you. The Lord is still waiting to be gracious; he says to all, Come unto me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Do you not see this rest desirable? What rest, either here or hereafter, can you expect, if you remain in the service of sin? Why may not you obtain your liberty? You are no worse than others, either by nature or practice. Though you have been transgressors from the womb, you are not excluded, if you do not exclude yourselves: though your sinful habits and inclinations are exceeding strong, he is able to subdue them. There is a power in his blood, and in that Spirit which he is exalted to bestow, sufficient to make the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots †, to soften the hardest heart, and to pardon the most aggravated guilt, and to enable those

* Heb. xii. 1. † Jer. xiii. 23.

thoſe to do good who have been accuſtomed to do evil. Ariſe, he calleth you. O may he accompany the outward call of his word with the efficacious power of his grace, that you may this inſtant obey his voice, and flee to him for refuge! Whither can you flee elſe? Who but Jeſus can ſave you from the wrath to come? Be wiſe, and delay no longer. "But if you will not hear, mine eye "ſhall weep for you in ſecret places *." If you will not come to Jeſus for life, you muſt die. If you are out of Chriſt, God is angry with you every day. The curſe of his broken law lies heavy upon you, whether you are aſleep or awake, abroad or at home, at the market or in the church. The wrath of God is revealed againſt you; if you turn not, he will whet his ſword †; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath prepared the inſtruments of death to ſmite you; he hath ordained the arrows of his vengeance againſt you: And can you, dare you, go on in your ſins, and ſay, I ſhall have peace? O may you be wiſe in time! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the "living God ‡." "Conſider this, ye that forget "him, leſt he tear you in pieces, and there be none "to deliver ||."

* Jer. xiii. 17. † Pſ. vii. 12.
‡ Heb. x. 31. || Pſ. l. 22.

SER-

SERMON XII.

OF THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

MATTH. xi. 29.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls.

THOSE who are enabled to come unto Christ, not only experience a change of state, but of character, disposition, and practice. They are not only freed from condemnation, but they are made partakers of a divine nature. They are delivered from the slavery and yoke of Satan, and made willing in the day of the Lord's power, to accept and embrace his yoke, which is commended to us in the following verse, as easy and pleasant. Our Lord speaks of his service as a yoke or burden, because it is so esteemed by all who know him not. They account him a hard master, and think his service wearisome; but those who have made the experiment, find it otherwise; though it must be confessed it exposes to some difficulties, calls for the daily exercise of self-denial, and will not admit either of competition or composition with the world, nor can be pleasing to the unrenewed part of our nature. But the knowledge of his love, the hope of glory, and those seasonable refreshments with which he is pleased to favour those who come unto him, sweeten every bitter thing, and make them willing to bear his yoke, and to prefer it to all that the world accounts freedom.

Let us inquire,

1. What is meant by the yoke of Christ.

2. The

2. The proper means by which we are enabled to take it upon us; that is, the believing consideration of him as our effectual teacher, and perfect pattern.

3. The happy effect of bearing his yoke: We shall find rest to our souls.

I. The yoke of Christ, taken at large, includes all the dependence, obedience, and submission, which we owe him, as our rightful Lord, and gracious Redeemer. He has a double right to us; "he made us*." We are the creatures of his power; he gave us our being, with all our capacities and enjoyments. And farther, "he bought "us†;" he pitied us in our low and fallen state, and gave his own life, his precious blood, to ransom us from that ruin and misery which was the just desert of our sins. There is good reason, therefore, that we should be his, and live and cleave to him in love alone; that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. In particular, we may consider,

1. The yoke of his profession. This is very pleasing to a gracious soul, so far as faith is in exercise. Far from being ashamed of the gospel of Christ, he is ready and willing to tell to all who will hear, what God has done for his soul. Many young converts, in the first warmth of their affection, have more need of a bridle than of a spur in this concern. For want of prudence to time things rightly, and perhaps for want of more tenderness mixed with their zeal, they are apt to increase their own troubles, and sometimes, by pushing things too far, to obstruct the success of their well-meant endeavours to convince others. But though this is a fault, it is a fault on the right side, which time,

* Psal. c. 3. † Acts, xx. 28.

experience, and obſervation, will correct. And though we are haſty enough to condemn the irregular overflowings of a heart deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of eternal things, I doubt not but the Lord, who owns and approves the main principle from whence they ſpring, beholds them with a far more favourable eye, than he does the cold, cautious, temporizing conduct of ſome others, who value themſelves upon their prudence. We ſhould judge thus, if we had ſervants of our own. If we had one who was heartily and affectionately devoted to our intereſts, always ready to run by night or by day, refuſing no danger or difficulty from a deſire to pleaſe us, though ſometimes through ignorance or inattention he ſhould make a miſtake, we ſhould prefer him to another of greater knowledge and abilities, who was always ſlow and backward, and diſcovered at leaſt as much care to ſave himſelf from inconveniencies, as to promote our ſervice. However, this warm zeal uſually ſuffers abatement; we are fleſh as well as ſpirit; and there are ſome circumſtances attending a profeſſion of the goſpel, on the account of which it may be with propriety termed a yoke to us, who have ſo many remaining evils within us, and ſo many outward temptations to call them forth. It will certainly ſtir up oppoſition from the world, and may probably break * in upon our deareſt connections, and threaten our moſt neceſſary temporal intereſts.

2. The yoke of his precepts. Theſe the gracious ſoul approves and delights in; but ſtill we are renewed but in part. And when the commands of Chriſt ſtand in direct oppoſition to the will of man, or call upon us to ſacrifice a right hand or a right eye; though the Lord will ſurely make thoſe who depend

* 2 Tim. iii. 12.; Matth. x. 36.

depend upon him victorious at the laſt, yet it will coſt them a ſtruggle; ſo that when they are ſenſible how much they owe to his power working in them, and enabling them to overcome, they will at the ſame time have a lively conviction of their own weakneſs. Abraham believed in God, and delighted to obey; yet when he was commanded to ſacrifice his only ſon, this was no eaſy trial of his ſincerity and obedience; and all who are partakers of his faith are expoſed to meet, ſooner or later, with ſome call of duty, little leſs contrary to the dictates of fleſh and blood.

3. The yoke of his diſpenſations. This none can bear as they ought, but thoſe who come to him. It is natural to us to repine, to fret and toſs like a wild bull in a net *, when we are under afflictions. Believers likewiſe find their fleſh weak, when their ſpirits are willing; yet they ſee ſufficient reaſons to ſubmiſſion, and they know where to apply for grace. Affliction is a touchſtone that diſcovers what ſpirit a man is of. The hypocrite may keep up a fair ſemblance of true piety, while all things go ſmooth and to his wiſh; but in ſharp troubles the maſk will drop off. Satan proceeded upon this maxim in his conteſt with Job; and the maxim is a truth, though Satan was miſtaken in the application.

II. The appointed means by which ſinners are enabled to bear the threefold yoke, is ſuggeſted in the words "Learn of me, for I am meek and "lowly." However amiable and deſirable the diſpoſition I have deſcribed may appear, you will never acquire it by any ſtrength, wiſdom, or diligence of your own. Our Lord, to prevent you wearying yourſelves with unſucceſsful effort and needleſs

* Iſa. li. 20.

needleſs diſappointments, has aſſured you beforehand, "Without me you can do nothing *." But here he graciouſly offers you the aſſiſtance you need. As if he had ſaid, I know you are unable of yourſelves, but I will help you. Be not afraid of the proſpect, but conſider what I *can* do. To my power all things are eaſy; I can make the crooked ſtraight, and the rough ſmooth; I can ſweetly engage your affections, ſubdue your wills, influence your practice, and deliver you from your ſinful fears. Conſider likewiſe what I *have* done; thouſands, who by nature were as unſkilful and impatient as yourſelves, have been made willing in the day of my power.

Therefore, *Learn of me.* Be not afraid to come to me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Great and mighty as I am, you may freely apply to me in every doubt and difficulty. Awakened ſouls, through a ſenſe of guilt, and the power of unbelief, are backward and unwilling to come to Chriſt. They think, ſurely he will take no notice of ſuch a one as I am. But obſerve how kind and condeſcending is his invitation; how graciouſly ſuited to engage our confidence! It was ſaid of a Roman Emperor, that thoſe who durſt ſpeak to him were ignorant of his greatneſs, but thoſe who durſt not were ſtill more ignorant of his goodneſs. This was a falſe and impious compliment when applied to a ſinful mortal; but it is juſtly applicable to Jeſus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. His glorious majeſty may well fill our hearts with awe, and humble us into the duſt before him: but his immenſe compaſſions, tenderneſs, and love, are revealed, to overbalance our fears, to give us confidence to draw nigh to him, and an encouraging hope that he will draw nigh to us.

Again,

* John, xv. 5.

Again, *Learn of me.* I know the cause why these things appear so hard. It is owing to the pride and impatience of your hearts. To remedy this, take *me* for your example; I require nothing of you but what I have performed before you, and on your account: In the path I mark out for you, you may perceive my own footsteps all the way. This is a powerful argument, a sweet recommendation of the yoke of Christ, to those who love him, that he bore it himself. He is not like the Pharisees, whom he censured * on this very account, who bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers.

1. Are you terrified with the difficulties attending your profession, disheartened by hard usage, or too ready to shew resentment against those who oppose you? Learn of Jesus, imitate and admire his constancy: "Consider him who endured the con-"tradiction of sinners against himself †." Make a comparison (so the word imports) between yourself and him, between the contradiction which he endured, and that which you are called to struggle with, then surely you will be ashamed to complain. Admire and imitate his meekness; when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; he wept for his enemies, and prayed for his murderers. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

2. Do you find it hard to walk stedfastly in his precepts, especially in some particular instances, when the maxims of worldly prudence, and the pleadings of flesh and blood, are strongly against you? Learn of Jesus. He pleased not himself ‡,

* Matth. xxiii. 4. † Heb. xii. 3. ἀναλογισασθε.
‡ Rom. xv. 3.

he considered not what was safe and easy, but what was the will of his heavenly Father. Intreat him to strengthen you with strength in your soul, that as you bear the name of his disciple, you may resemble him in every part of your conduct, and shine as lights in a dark and selfish world, to the glory of his grace.

3. Are you tempted to repine at the dispensations of divine Providence? Take Jesus for your pattern. Did *he* say, when the unspeakable sufferings he was to endure for sinners were just coming upon him, "The cup which my Father has put "into my hands, shall I not drink it*?" and shall *we* presume to have a will of our own? especially when we further reflect, that as his sufferings were wholly on our account, so all our sufferings are by his appointment, and all designed by him to promote our best, that is, our spiritual and eternal welfare?

It is thus by looking to Jesus that the believer is enlightened and strengthened, and grows in grace and sanctification, according to that passage of St Paul, "We all with open face," or unvailed face, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, "are changed into the same image, from glory to "glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord†." The word of God is a glass in which the goodness and beauty of the Lord Jesus are manifested to the eye of faith by the light of the Holy Spirit. In this wonderful glass the whole object is not seen at once, but every view we take strengthens the sight to discover something not perceived before. And the prospect is not only affecting, but transforming; by beholding we are gradually formed into the resemblance of him whom we see, admire, and love.

All

* John, xviii. 11. † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

All those whom Jesus thus teaches to bear his yoke, find his promise fulfilled; they obtain,

III. REST to their souls. Those who are truly awakened want nothing to make them happy, but to be assured that they have an interest in the Redeemer's love. Now, this satisfaction is peculiar to those who take his yoke upon them, and are daily learning of him, and copying after him.

For, 1. This affords the best and most unshaken evidence that he has begun a good work of grace in our hearts: I say the best, *because* the most unshaken. Many are greatly perplexed to know if they are truly converted; and are kept the longer in suspense, because they overlook the ordinary scripture method of confirmation. They expect to know it by some extraordinary sensation suddenly impressed upon their minds. But besides that there have been many instances in which this expected evidence has been counterfeited, and a groundless confidence has been placed in a delusion or vain imagination, (to the hurt of many, if not to their overthrow), even when they are from the gracious Spirit of God, they are for the most part transient; and when a different frame takes place, the believer is often tempted to question the reality of what went before. I think therefore the testimony of an enlightened conscience, judging by the word of God, and deciding in our favour, that by his grace we have been enabled to take up the yoke of Christ, is in some respects a more satisfactory evidence, that we are his, and that he is ours, than if an angel was sent from heaven to tell us, that our names are written in the book of life.

2. The promise of the peculiar manifestation of his love *, is made and restricted to those who

* John, xiv. 21.

walk in the path of obedience. If the discoveries the Lord is pleased sometimes to make of himself to the soul, are not the proper and direct evidences of a state of grace, they are however exceedingly desirable. Whoever has tasted the sweets of that water of life, cannot but long for repeated draughts. When he lifts up the light of his countenance upon the soul, then is love, joy, and peace within, however dark and distressing things may be without. But this desirable presence can only be expected, while we wear his yoke, and walk in his steps. If we turn aside into forbidden paths, if we decline or dishonour the profession of his truth, we grieve the Holy Spirit, on whose communications our comforts are suspended; we give the enemies of our souls encouragement to assault us, and are in danger of falling from one wickedness to another, without the power of withstanding either the greatest or the smallest temptation, till the Lord is pleased to turn again to our assistance. In such a situation there can be no rest. "But he that walk-"eth uprightly, walketh surely *," and findeth rest.

And true rest is no otherwise to be obtained. Those of you who refuse the yoke of Christ, well know in yourselves that you are far from rest. Your experience agrees with this declaration in the prophet: "There is no peace, saith my God, to "the wicked †." In what respect will you dare to pretend that you have the advantage of those who bear the yoke of Christ?

We allow, the profession of the gospel is subject to inconveniencies; but surely not to many as you meet with who are ashamed, or afraid, or averse, to maintain it. If those who are of your household are not your foes on this account, yet we

* Prov. x. 9. † Isa. lvii. 21.

we can see how it fares with those who live without the fear of God. How many, and how sharp, are your trials from disobedient children, unfaithful servants, false friendships, ungoverned passions, and unsatisfied desires! Nor do you save any thing in point of character, not even with those by whom you are most desirous to be esteemed. They cannot indeed reproach you with being a believer; but may they not, do they not, reproach and despise you for being a drunkard, or a liar, or a miser, or an extortioner? And is this more honourable than to suffer shame for the cause of Christ?

Do the precepts of Christ seem hard? Certainly not so hard as that miserable bondage you are under to Satan, the god of this world, who works in you, and rules over you at his will. He will not allow you to listen to the united remonstrances of conscience, health, interest, and reputation. But you are hurried on in his drudgery, constrained, like a mill-horse, to toil in the same tedious round of folly and sin; though you are aware of the consequences and wages beforehand. How absurd is it for you to boast of your freedom, while you are compelled to rush into present misery, and to dare your eternal ruin, with your eyes open!

And how greatly are you to be pitied under the many unavoidable afflictions of life, to which you are equally liable with the servants of Christ! When your idols are torn from you, when sickness seizes you, or death stares you in the face, then how do you fret and pine! how many are your fears and alarms! Then you are your own tormentors. The review of the past affords you only shame and regret. If you look forward to the future, you are filled with foreboding fears and distressing apprehensions; you are weary of living, and afraid to die.

Why then will you continue thus, when Jesus says, "Come unto me, that you may have rest?" O may he incline your hearts this day to hear his voice! Have you been hardened in your evil ways, by a suspicion that your case is desperate, that it is now too late, and that he whom you have so often rejected will refuse you mercy? Beware of such a thought: "There is forgiveness with him *." "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is "the day of salvation." He is gracious to pardon, and mighty to save; only acknowledge your offences, and throw down the arms of your rebellion. He is mighty to save, and no less willing than able. As yet there is hope, but who can tell how long his patience may bear with you? Take notice of that awful denunciation! "He that being often re- "proved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be "destroyed, and that without remedy †." If you seek him to-day with all your hearts, you shall find him. But who can answer for to-morrow? To-morrow, or to-night, your souls may be required of you; or if your lives are spared, you may be given up to judicial and incurable hardness of heart. If his Spirit should cease from striving with you, you are lost for ever.

* Ps. cxxx. 4. † Prov. xxix. 1.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

THE SERVICE OF CHRIST EASY AND PLEASANT TO HIS PEOPLE.

MATTH. xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

THIS verſe alone, if ſeriouſly attended to, might convince multitudes, that though they bear the name of Chriſtians, and are found among the Lord's worſhipping people, they are as yet entire ſtrangers to the religion of the goſpel. Can it be ſuppoſed, that our Lord would give a falſe character of his yoke? If not, how can any dream, that they are his followers, while they account a life of communion with God, and entire devotedneſs to his ſervice, to be dull and burdenſome? Thoſe, however, who have made the happy trial, find it to be ſuch a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced, that there is no real pleaſure attainable in any other way.

What the yoke of Chriſt is, we have already conſidered. It includes the profeſſion of his goſpel, obedience to his precepts, and ſubmiſſion to his *will* under every diſpenſation. But ſince it is confeſſed, that a ſinful nature and a ſinful world will bring many difficulties, trials, and temptations, upon all who walk in this way, it may be worth our while to inquire more particularly, what there is in the yoke of Chriſt that overpowers all theſe hardſhips, and makes ſuch amends for every ſuffering, that, upon the whole, every believer will

subscribe to this as a sure and experienced truth, that the "yoke is easy, and the burden light."

I. THOSE who bear the yoke of Christ, act from a principle which makes all things easy. This is love. It is said of Jacob, that when he served a hard master seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love which he bare her *. And many of you find it easy to do much for your parents, children, and friends, because you love them. But there is no love like that which a redeemed sinner bears to him who "has loved "him, and washed him from his sins in his own "blood." Farther, love produces the greatest effects when it is mutual. We are willing to do and suffer much to gain the affection of a person we regard, though we are not sure of success, but when the affection is reciprocal, it adds strength to every motive. Now, the believer does not love at uncertainties: he knows that Jesus loved him first, loved him when he was in a state of enmity †; and that nothing but the manifestation and power of this love could have taught his hard unfeeling heart to love *him* whom he never saw ‡. This love, therefore, affords two sweet and powerful encouragements in service.

1. A cordial desire to please. Love does what it can, and is only sorry that it can do no more. We seldom think much, as I have hinted already, either of time, pains, or expence, when the heart is warmly engaged. The world, who understand not this heart-felt spring of true religion, think it strange that the believer will not run with the same excess of riot with them ||. They wonder what pleasure he can find in secret prayer, in reading and

* Gen. xxix. 20. † 1 John, iv. 19. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 8
|| 1 Pet. iv. 4.

and hearing the word of God; they pity the poor man who has such a melancholy turn, and charitably advise him not to carry things too far. But the believer can give them a short answer in the apostle's words: "The love of Christ constrains me *." His ruling passion is the same with theirs, which makes his pursuit no less uniform and abiding; but the objects are as different as light from darkness. They love the perishing pleasures of sin, the mammon of unrighteousness, and the praise of men; but he loves Jesus.

2. A pleasing assurance of acceptance. If we know not whether what we do will be favourably received or not, it makes us remiss and indifferent. But this animates the Lord's people; they are assured, that he will not overlook the smallest services or sufferings they are engaged in for his sake. He has told them in his word, "That if they give but "a cup of cold water in his name, and on his ac- "count, he will accept and acknowledge it, as if "it were done immediately to himself †."

II. It makes a service still more easy and pleasant, if, besides acting from a principle of love, the service itself is agreeable to our inclination. Esau would probably have done any thing to please his father, in hopes of obtaining the blessing; but no command could please him more than to be sent for venison, because he was a cunning hunter, and his pleasure lay that way ‡. Now, the believer has received a new nature; so that the Lord's commandments are not grievous to him, but he delights in them with his whole heart. It is true, he groans under remaining corruptions; and this is properly his burden, not the service of Christ, which,

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † Mark, ix. 41.
‡ Gen. xxv. 27. and xxvii. 3.

which he approves and delights in, but because he can serve him no better. So far as faith is in exercise, he rejoices in every part of the yoke of Christ. He glories in the profession of his name. He has made Moses's choice; he prefers even the reproach of Christ to all the honours of the world *; and has a measure of that spirit, by which the apostles were enabled to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name †. He heartily consents to the precepts; he esteems them as a light to his feet; he makes them his meditation all the day. Nothing pleases him more than to find an increasing victory over the hindrances to his obedience; and the time of his greatest grief is, when, through infirmity, or the prevalence of temptation, he is seduced to neglect or transgress them, though in the smallest instance, and in what does not pass under human observation. Even afflictions, though not joyous in themselves, but grievous, are cheerfully submitted to, because the Lord has appointed them, and is pleased to account them a filling up of his sufferings ‡.

III. In other cases, even when there is a principle of love, and the service not disagreeable in itself, yet weakness may render it wearisome or impracticable. Though perhaps you would willingly take a long journey to serve a friend; yet if you are sick or lame, what could you do? But the yoke of Christ is light and easy in this respect, that there is a sufficiency of strength provided for the performance. This consideration makes every difficulty vanish; for though these should be increased tenfold, yet if strength be increased in an equal proportion, it amounts to the same thing. What

* Heb. xi. 26. † Acts, v. 41. ‡ Col. i. 24.

What is hard or impossible to a child, is easy to a man; what is hard to flesh and blood, is easy to faith and grace. The believer, though weak in himself, is strong in the Lord. The power on which he depends is not in his own keeping; but it is treasured up in the *covenant* of grace, or in the Lord Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, and is always to be obtained by prayer. Every child of God is interested in the blessing of Asher: "Thy "shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy day is, "so shall thy strength be *." By the *day* may be understood,

1. A day of service. Whatever the Lord appoints for us to do, if we depend upon him in the use of appointed means, he will certainly qualify, furnish, and strengthen us, for the accomplishment of it. If David is called out to meet Goliah, though he is but a stripling †, and the other a practised warrior from his youth, he shall not be disheartened or overcome, but be made a conqueror, though all appearances are against him. If we are in the path of duty, and if our help and hope is in the name of the Lord, we may confidently expect that he will uphold us, however faint and enfeebled we may seem to be to ourselves or others.

2. A day of suffering. If, like Daniel and his companions, we should be threatened with lions and flames, we may confidently commit our way to God; he can controul the fire, and stop the lions mouths ‡. While all things are in his hands, whose we are, and whom we serve, why should we fear that they will act beyond the bounds of his permission, or that he will permit them to do any thing which

* Deut. xxxiii. 25. † 1 Sam. xvii. 37.
‡ Dan. iii. 16. and vi. 22; Ps. xci. 13.; 2 Tim. iv. 17.

which is not his purpose to over-rule to his advantage? Such considerations in the hour of need, seasonably impressed by his good Spirit, together with a trust in his promises, shall inspire us with new strength to meet the greatest danger undismayed; and with regard to trials immediately from his own gracious hand, he will so adjust them, in number, season, weight, and measure, to the ability he communicates, that we both shall be able to bear, and also find a way made for us to escape. With such assurances, we may boldly say, "The "Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man (or "Satan) can do unto me."

IV. THERE is farther, a consideration of profit and advantage, which makes the yoke of Christ easy. The believing soul is not mercenary. He loves his master and his service; yet it is impossible to serve God for nought. In the keeping of his commandments, there is a reward, though not of debt, yet of grace*: A great and sure reward, respecting both the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Those who sincerely take up the yoke of Christ, and cleave to him in love alone, have ample compensation in the present life for all that their profession can cost them. They enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, which is compared to a continual feast. St Paul, though a champion for free grace, and determined to glory only in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus†, expresses a high and just value for this privilege; and that it afforded comfort, yea joy, in a time of trouble. Superadded to this, they are often favoured with the peculiar consolations of the Holy Spirit, which, though slightly esteemed by those who know them not,

* Ps. xix. 11. † 2 Cor. i. 12.

not, satisfy the soul as with marrow and fatness, and can change the voice of mourning into songs of praise in an instant *. And though these are not their constant food, yet they have real and habitual communion with God, from day to day, in his ordinances and providences. They live in his presence; they converse with him, and he with them; their good things are doubly pleasing, because they receive them from his hand: and this thought likewise sweetens every bitter cup of affliction which he prepares for their good. The mutual intercourse and communion his people have with each other, is likewise a considerable branch of their present reward. How pleasing is it, when speaking to each other in his name, they take sweet counsel together, they are confirmed in his way, by finding how their experiences answer as face to face in a glass; and he causes their hearts to burn within them, while they are freely declaring what he has done for their souls. Lastly, They are happy in a comfortable expectation of a better world †; and when the appointed time comes, death will put an end to all their troubles; and then shall they fully know and possess the future reward which the Lord has prepared and reserved for them that love him.

This is briefly summed up by the apostle: They shall be absent from the body ‡, and all its inseparable evils; sin and sorrow, want, pain, and every distress that belongs to this mortal state, shall affect them no more; and they shall be present with the Lord, whom they love. Then they shall see his face without a cloud, and share his joy without abatement or interruption; and all this shall be for ever. When they are made pillars of the New

* Ps. lxiii. 3. † Gen. xix. 18. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 8.

New Jerusalem *, they shall come out no more. The prospect of this makes them rejoice under all their tribulations; for they know whereto they lead, and how they will end. "These light and "momentary afflictions are working for them a far "more exceeding and eternal weight of glory †."

From these things I hope it will appear that the yoke of Christ is easy. His people serve him because they love him; they love his ways: he is their strength; he comforts them now, and will be their portion for ever.

But perhaps some, whom I would willingly comfort, will rather be discouraged by this representation, and say, Alas! if it is so, I am yet to seek. My love is so faint, my strength so feeble, my consolations so small, my obedience so imperfect, that I am afraid I have not known the easy yoke of Christ. There are therefore some other things to be taken into the account, and which are no just exception to the character our Lord here gives of his yoke.

1. The entrance, or first application of the mind to the yoke, or profession of the gospel, is seldom pleasant. Though the work of grace leads to love, it usually begins in fear. On this point we have already spoken at large. It is no pleasing state to be weary and heavy-laden, to see ourselves obnoxious to a curse, and unable to escape; yet by apprehensions of this kind the soul is prepared to embrace the yoke of Christ; and none but those who have experienced the misery of a fallen state, will be truly desirous of the gospel-rest.

2. The progress is gradual. The first dawnings of grace in the heart are faint, and hardly perceptible;

* Rev. ii. 12.; 1 Thess. iv. 17. † 2 Cor. iv. 17.

perceptible; hence the whole process is compared to things that are very inconsiderable in their first principles. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which is hid and lost in the earth for a season; it is like leaven, which when cast into meal may be concealed and unnoticed for a while, but by degrees diffuses its influence through the whole mass *: It is like the corn, which springs up and comes forward night and day, a man knows not how †. The growth in the Christian life being thus slow and indistinct, many who aim to ascertain their interest rather by the degree than the reality of grace, are often dejected to find their attainments proceed no faster. It is indeed a humbling consideration, but ought not to rob us of the comfort arising from a believing view of what Jesus has completely wrought out for us, and of what he has promised he will infallibly perform in us, in his own good time. A deliverance from this poring into ourselves for the grounds of our hope, is a part, a considerable part, of the rest to which he invites us.

3. The difficulties attendant on that course of faith and obedience, which is included in taking his yoke upon us, are many and great. While we sojourn in a wilderness-state, and in a sinful nature, there will be fightings without, and fears within. It is the appointed and necessary rule of our profession, that "through much tribulation we must "enter into the kingdom of God ‡." All who are against him will be against us for his sake, and the evil heart of unbelief will shew itself in a variety of forms, as it is acted upon by various impressions, from the things of sense and the powers of darkness. But these troubles do not arise from the spiritual yoke of Christ, but from our present situation and

* Matth. xiii. 31. 33. † Mark, iv. 27. ‡ Acts, xiv. 22.

and circumstances, and shall therefore shortly cease for ever. His ways are ways of pleasantness, though we are sure to meet with perplexity and uneasiness, so far and so often as we wander from them into our own crooked paths. But,

4. The end is sure. "He that endureth to the "end shall be saved*;" and all who are in his way, have his promise and power engaged in their behalf, that they shall certainly endure, that he will so lead, guide, support, and strengthen them, that neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate them from his love†. Your complaints and fears, therefore, are no proof that you are not right. Go on in his name. Trust in him in whom you have believed, and be nothing terrified by your adversaries. The longer you wear the yoke, the easier you will find it.

Let each one examine himself by what has been offered. If you have not a principle of true love to Christ, and a prevailing desire to live in all holy obedience to his will, you are no Christian; and though you may begin warmly, you will not be able to hold out, but your profession will wither away for want of root and moisture. Nor is it difficult to know whether you love him or no; if you do, you have seen your need of him, and abhor yourself in dust and ashes.

From hence likewise you may discern the difference between the religion of the gospel, and the formal worship that many are contented with, in which the heart has no place. Remember that "God is a Spirit‡," and unless you love him, you cannot possibly please him. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. His commandments likewise are

* Matth. x. 22. † Rom. viii. 38. ‡ John iv. 24.

are ſpiritual; they extend beyond the ſurface of the outward conduct, and take cogniſance even of the retired thoughts and intents of the heart. Many ſins may be avoided, and many duties performed, from motives and principles which, not being derived from his word, or conformable to it, are therefore ſinful in themſelves, and make every thing proceeding from them defective and diſpleaſing in his ſight. If you are attempting to ſerve him by your own natural ſtrength and underſtanding, be aſſured that you have not yet taken up the yoke of Chriſt; if you had, you would find it anſwerable to the character he has given of it, for his word is truth. But your conſtrained obedience you know in yourſelves, far from being eaſy and light, is a heavy burden which you would be glad to caſt off if you durſt. You ſerve the Lord as a ſlave ſerves a hard maſter, not with a willing mind, but of neceſſity, and from a dread of puniſhment. But in vain do you draw near to him with your lips, while your heart is far from him. Therefore ſpend no longer your labour for that which is not bread, but come to Jeſus, that you may find reſt for your ſouls. He is able to take away your heart of ſtone, and give you a heart of fleſh, to put a new ſpirit in you that ſhall delight in his yoke, to give you ſtrength and ability for every part of your duty, and to make you a willing people in the day of his power.

Believers, rejoice in your ſecurity. The Lord has given you a never-dying principle of love, and provided for you a never-failing ſupply of grace. Theſe will bear you up through all your journey, and at laſt bring you ſafely home to the manſions provided for you in your Father's houſe. Then ſhall you praiſe him, world without end.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

BELIEVERS CAUTIONED AGAINST MISCONDUCT IN THEIR PROFESSION.

ROM. xiv. 16.

Let not your good be evil spoken of.

THE immediate occasion of this caution you may learn from the context. It has pleased God from the beginning, to permit his people, who all agree in the great and essential truths of the gospel, to differ in some things of less importance. This difference of judgement gives room for the mutual exercise of patience, forbearance, tenderness, and charity; but at the same time, too often affords opportunity for the remaining corruptions of the heart to discover and exert themselves. The Jewish converts were for some time attached to the observance of that distinction in meats and drinks which had been enjoyed by the law of Moses; the Gentiles, on the contrary, claimed a right to be free from this yoke, as a part of the liberty which they had received from Christ. The apostle does not in this place blame either party with respect to their own judgement and practice; but he reproves them for censuring and despising each other; and he especially reproves those who understood their liberty in the gospel, for not being prudent in the use of it, but rather forward to provoke and offend their weaker brethren. He confirms their liberty, but admonishes them not to abuse it, either by urging others to act against their consciences, or by treating them with contempt, because they had not entirely laid

laid aside these scruples and prejudices to which they had been long accustomed. "Let not your "good be evil spoken of." Be thankful for your liberty, but do not bring it into discredit and reproach, by acting in an unbecoming spirit towards others.'

The instruction in my text, understood in this sense, has always been applicable and seasonable in the Christian church, and perhaps never more so than in our land, and in our times. While believers in Jesus, who are led by the same Spirit into the same fundamental truths, and stand in the most endeared relation to each other through their common Head, place such undue stress upon lesser incidental differences, and are professed partisans for the little interests of systems, denominations, and leaders, *love*, the grand characteristic of their profession, is hardly discernible; they censure and grieve each other, retard the success of the cause which they would all be thought to have most at heart, and open the mouths of the adversaries to revile that which they understand not. The prevalence of this wrong disposition calls for the admonition in my text. Be thankful for your privileges; you not only claim the rights of private judgement and liberty of conscience, as men and as Christians, but as Britons you possess them. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of;" allow to others that freedom which you expect yourselves; and if you do not suppose yourselves infallible, suppose it possible that some may be as near to the Lord as yourselves, who cannot agree with you in every sentiment you have adopted.

But this direction may be taken in a much more general sense. It behoves all who honour the Lord Jesus Christ to be careful in every part of their conduct, that they do not give occasion for their good to be evil spoken of. To make the subject

ſubject as ſuitable as I can to the different ſtates and characters of all preſent, I ſhall,

I. Inquire what is the believer's good.

I. Explain and apply the advice here given, "Let not your good be evil ſpoken of."

I. ALL mankind have ſomething near at heart, on which their dependance is placed, and wherein they find their chief pleaſure. This (whatever it is) is their good; and, according to the object in which they delight, is their proper character. By nature the world and worldly things are the higheſt good we ſeek after; and theſe, in one view or other, as tempers and ſituations vary, are purſued with unwearied earneſtneſs. Riches, honours, ſinful pleaſures, are the poor things in view, when the unrenewed heart cries out, in its eager purſuits, "Who will ſhew us any good *?" If your ſtrongeſt deſires tend this way, your good will not be evil-ſpoken of by many. Men will praiſe you when you do well for yourſelf; you are not therefore concerned in the admonition of my text. Only take notice what the word of God declares of your good, and of you for accounting it ſo. Your good is vanity, your fruit is vexation of ſpirit, and you who ſet your hearts on ſuch a good as the objects of ſenſe can furniſh, are adjudged "enemies "to God †." You yourſelves will ſpeak evil of this good when you come to die, if you die in your ſins. Then you will ſee a propriety in Eſau's words to your own caſe, "Behold, I am at the "point to die, and what profit ſhall this birth-"right do to me ‡?"

As the world is the good of the unconverted, ſo a covenant God in Chriſt is the good and portion

* Pſ. iv. 6. † James, iv. 4. ‡ Gen. xxv. 32.

tion of all who are called by his grace. They are ever looking to the obedience and blood of Jesus, applied by the Spirit of grace, as the sole foundation of their hope and comfort. God is their good in the highest sense, and every thing else is good, so far as it leads to him, and assists them in maintaining communion with him. In this view we may mention several particulars, each of which they account their good, because the means of enjoying and glorifying their God.

1. The gospel, that gracious revelation by which they have been taught to know themselves, and to know Jesus, is their good. All the doctrines, precepts, and promises, contained in the scripture, are a very precious treasure, in which they rejoice more than those who find great spoil. Each of them can say, in the language of the Psalmist, "The law of thy mouth is dearer to me than "thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are "thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey "to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my "meditation all the day long *." By this word they are enlightened, quickened, warned, comforted, and supported; therefore it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, and more than their necessary food †.

2. The ordinances make a part of their good. A famine of the word of the Lord would distress them greatly; and if they may but have frequent opportunities of this kind, and meet with his gracious presence in them, they can be content to be without many things which the men of this world highly value. When beset with many straits, and surrounded with troubles, they can find refreshment in the Lord's assurance by the prophet, "And though the Lord give you the bread of ad-

* Psal. cxix. 72. 97. 103. † Job, xxiii. 12.

" verſity, and the water of affliction, yet ſhall not " thy teachers be removed into a corner any " more; but thine eyes ſhall ſee thy teachers *." If this promiſe is fulfilled to them, they will not greatly complain of the bread of adverſity, although that is joined with it. But, on the contrary, they find it a hard trial to be deprived of lively ordinances and faithful miniſters, however advantageous and pleaſing their ſituation may be in temporal things, becauſe theſe are not their good.

3. They account their profeſſion a part of their good. They eſteem it a high privilege to bear the name of Chriſt, though it expoſes them to the reproach of the world. They account it a great and important truſt to have the honour of the goſpel committed to them, and in ſome meaſure dependent on their conduct. When they are in their right minds, they would rather die than be guilty of any thing that might bring it into diſcredit. Wilfully they cannot, they dare not do it; but through ignorance and infirmity they are prone to miſtake, and therefore need, and are deſirous to obſerve, the caution in my text.

4. Their experiences are their good, their choice pearls; I mean, the inward dealings of the Lord with their ſouls; the proofs they have had of his power and wiſdom in bringing them thus far ſafely on their way to his kingdom, the diſcoveries he has given them of the deceitfulneſs of their own hearts, the manifeſtations of his grace, love, and nearneſs to them, notwithſtanding all their unworthineſs and unfaithfulneſs. Some of theſe experiences have coſt them dear, have coſt them many a pang, trouble, and conflict: yet they would not be without them to avoid all that they have ſuffered; and

* If xxx 20.

and they are content to suffer on, if by any means they may increase this precious stock. They delight to recollect how low they were brought, how wonderfully delivered, what answers they have been favoured with to their poor prayers; and from hence to collect the all-sufficiency and goodness of him to whom they have fled for refuge, and to derive arguments wherewith to combat their unbelieving fears in time to come. Thus far their experiences are their good; not as the foundation of their hope, or the source of their comfort, for these their whole reliance is on the obedience and blood of Jesus the Saviour; but as evidences, that they have neither "followed cunningly-devised fables, "nor received the grace of God in vain *."

Thus much in general, that you may all have something whereby to try your spirits, and to know whether you have embraced the good of the Lord's chosen people †. If your good does not lie in such things as I have mentioned, you have no durable riches, nothing but what you must soon leave behind you. Can you be content to be stript of all, and to enter poor, naked, and friendless, into an eternal world? O that you would take our Lord's advice! He might command, for he has all authority; but he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me "gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; "and white raiment, that thou mayest be cloathed, "and that the shame of thy nakedness do not ap-"pear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that "thou mayest see ‡."

But some there are whose hearts can go along with me in what I have said. The great God himself is your good. His word and ordinances, your profession of his name, and your experience of

* 2 Pet. i. 16.; 2 Cor. vi. 1. † Psal. cvi. 4. 5.
‡ Rev. iii. 18.

his goodneſs, are what you rejoice in. To you, then, I addreſs the reſt of my diſcourſe. "Let not your "good be evil ſpoken of."

I am,

II. To explain and apply this advice. The words plainly imply two things.

1. That there are many ready enough to ſpeak evil of your good; many who deſpiſe the goſpel, and you for profeſſing it; they watch for your halting, and will be glad of the ſmalleſt occaſion to expoſe you. The world, that loves its own, will make allowances in other caſes. Indiſcretions, and even vices, will be charged to the account of human infirmity, and the amiable name of candour ſhall be employed to conceal or palliate ſuch things as can by no means be juſtified. But if you are a profeſſed believer in Jeſus, you muſt not expect this candour will be extended to you; rather all your words and actions will be ſifted, your miſtakes exaggerated; and if any part of your conduct will bear a double conſtruction, it will generally be viewed in the moſt unfavourable light. Nay, even when there is no juſt occaſion afforded, falſehoods and calumnies have been and will be inventionally propagated againſt the ſervants of Chriſt *. That it muſt be ſo, we are often warned by ſcripture, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience.

2. That though it is impoſſible wholly to ſtop the mouths of evil-minded men, yet they would not be able to talk ſo faſt if the imprudence of believers did not too often afford them advantage. That ſuch occaſions ſhould ſometimes be given by thoſe whoſe hearts and aims are in the main ſincere, will not be thought ſtrange to any perſon who is acquainted with the true ſtate of human nature.

* Matth. v. .

nature. Through inadvertence, want of experience, errors of judgement, ſudden and unexpected temptations, and other evils inſeparable from our preſent ſituation, perſons, whoſe chief deſire is to adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things, may and do in ſome inſtances cauſe their good to be evil ſpoken of. It is, however, our bounden duty, as we regard the honour of God and his truth, to endeavour as much as poſſible to "cut off occaſion from them*" that ſeek occaſion in this reſpect.

In order to this, let us inquire, what are the moſt common objections which are made againſt the goſpel preaching and profeſſion, not only by malicious enemies, but ſometimes by perſons who diſcover no very bad intention, but are partly impoſed upon by the miſrepreſentations of others, and partly ſtumbled by the faults of profeſſors?

1*ſt*, It is objected, That our doctrine lays no ſufficient ſtreſs upon good works. We dare not indeed recommend them out of their proper place, or propoſe them as the ground of our acceptance with God. But I hope none who attend here will dare to ſay, that they are not frequently reminded, that "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the "Lord†." However, the world will judge more by what they *ſee* in *you*, than by what they *hear* from *me*. Be upon your guard, therefore, leſt by any inſtances of a trifling, fooliſh, unkind, or unjuſt conduct, you let your good be evil ſpoken of. It will not be a ſufficient apology to ſay, That your principles do not allow of theſe things, if thoſe who know you can charge them upon your practice.

2 *dly*, It is farther objected, That the evangelical

 ſyſtem

* 2 Cor. xi. 12.; 1 Pet. ii. 12. † Heb. xii. 14.

ſyſtem is a ſcheme chiefly made up of notions and ſubtle diſtinctions, and opens a door to a thouſand diſputes. This is one unhappy conſequence of our many diviſions and ſubdiviſions, and the heat with which they are contended for by their reſpective partiſans. Let this engage you to avoid and ſpurn contentious ſpirit. "Be ſwift to hear, ſlow to "ſpeak*;" and when a reaſon is aſked "of the "hope that is in you†," give your anſwers with meekneſs and fear, leſt you cauſe your good to be evil ſpoken of.

3*dly*, It is likewiſe a very common objection, That an uſual effect of this doctrine, is to make people idle and careleſs with regard to the neceſſary concerns and buſineſs of life. Indeed I ſhould not be unwilling to plead with candid and fair reaſoners, in behalf of young converts, on this point. At firſt ſeting out, the change is ſo great, their views of eternal things ſo ſtrong and affecting, that, conſidering human infirmity, it can hardly be otherwiſe but that the attention will be almoſt entirely taken up with them for a ſeaſon. While a ſenſe of unpardoned ſin is fixed upon the conſcience, and a perſon now duly aware of the uncertainty of life, is in ſuſpence about the greateſt of all concerns, and knows not how or whither he ſhall be able to flee from the wrath to come, it is no wonder if this ſolicitude ſhould in a great meaſure ſwallow up his thoughts, and leave him but little either leiſure or ability to attend to other concerns, which, however proper in their reſpective places, are confeſſedly, in compariſon of this, of little or no importance. In like manner, the removal of this burden is uſually accompanied with ſuch a lively ſenſe of the wiſdom, love, power, and grace of God, revealed in Chriſt Jeſus by the goſpel,

* James, i. 19. † 1 Pet. iii. 15.

pel, as may for a little while almoſt overpower and extinguiſh the apprehenſion of inferior things. But if this indifference about common duties continues very long, or is indulged to an extreme, it gives great and juſt offence. It cauſes the ways of truth to be evil ſpoken of, and we hardly know what to ſay, but this, That the fault is not owing to the goſpel, but to the neglect of what the goſpel teaches and enjoins. This is no new inconvenience; the apoſtles obſerved and reproved it in their day. There were ſuch miſtaken perſons among the Theſſalonians, who ſuppoſed or pretended, that the goſpel exempted them from labour. Of theſe he ſays, "Now them that are ſuch we exhort and "command, that with quietneſs they work, and "eat their own bread;" and farther directs, "that "if any would not work, neither ſhould they eat *." The Sabbath is the Lord's; and the ſame command which forbids us to do any work then, requires us to labour on the other ſix days. "Let "not your good be evil ſpoken of." Be faithful to your truſt, diligent in your buſineſs, do every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Give no one juſt cauſe to ſay, that ſince you have become religious, you care not (as the phraſe is) which end goes foremoſt; for this would be to put a ſtumbling-block in their way, and to increaſe their prejudices againſt the truth.

4*thly*, Once more: The goſpel-doctrine is charged with weakening the bands of natural and ſocial relation; that it makes children and ſervants heady, high-minded, and diſobedient, ſo that they preſently think themſelves wiſer than all about them, and are obſtinately bent to have their own wills. This objection will indeed cleave to the goſ-

* 2 Theſſ. iii. 10.—12.

pel so long as the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God are opposite to each other. For cases will inevitably arise, where we must either displease God or man, and then we ought not to hesitate a moment. But professors should take care to be assured that there is such a necessity, before they act against lawful authority; and especially when the point in dispute lies between children and parents. For though we ought to disobey and forsake father and mother when God's commands require it; yet next, under God, parents are above all to be honoured, consulted, and obeyed: and the excepted cases are not near so numerous as persons in the warmth of their first zeal are apt to suppose. The enemy suits his temptations to our occasions; and it is no uncommon thing to be drawn to act violently in our own spirits, while we imagine we are striving in the cause of God and truth.

In short, we are directed to examine ourselves, and others are allowed to examine us by our fruits. The people of the world are not proper judges of spiritual experiences, but they can judge tolerably right of tempers and actions. Some will watch you out of ill-will, and some will observe you for information. If they hear you have begun to make a religious profession, they will take notice to see if you are the better for it. They will observe you not only in the church, but in the shop and in the house: And if they perceive you are all of a piece, steady, quiet, humble, diligent, who knows but this may be a means in the hand of God to win upon them, and to give them a more favourable regard to the means which have wrought so effectually on you? But, on the contrary, if you are imprudent, rash, and careless, if you either conform to the world, or neglect your acknowledged duty in it, you will cause your good to be evil spoken of, bring difficulties upon yourselves,

ſelves, and put it out of your own power to be uſeful to others. Pray therefore for wiſdom and grace, to make your light ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. This is the great deſign and proper effect of the goſpel, when rightly underſtood. For as it is the grace of God alone which bringeth ſalvation; ſo this grace not only enlightens the underſtanding, but purifies the heart, regulates the conduct, works by love, and overcomes the world. It effectually teaches and enforces (what the beſt ſchemes of morality and philoſophy have always failed in) the denial of all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*; and by the motives it diſplays, and the ſtrength it communicates, enables the true Chriſtian to adorn his character in every relation, and to fill up the whole circle of duty as it reſpects himſelf, his neighbour, and the God with whom he has to do. It teaches to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly; to avoid whatſoever is contrary to the purity of the goſpel; to practiſe moderation in the uſe even of lawful things; and to do unto others as we would they ſhould do unto us. It teaches the rich to be humble and bountiful, the poor to be thankful and reſigned. It teaches ſuperiors to be kind, inferiors to be faithful. Huſbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants, magiſtrates and people, are all inſtructed by this grace to a conduct anſwerable to their high calling, and the common relation they ſtand in to him who has loved them, and waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood. For the morality of the goſpel has a nobler ſpring, and a more extenſive ſcope, than the ties of ſocial life. Their ſobriety and righteouſneſs are not ſubſtituted in the place of vital godlineſs, but are the

* Titus, ii. 11.—15.

fruits derived from it. The grace of God teaches them to live godly, to delight in him, to obey him, to do every thing for his ſake, as under his eye, and to be continually governed by a ſenſe of his unſpeakable love manifeſted in his Son, and "an "expectation of the bleſſed hope ſet before us, "the glorious appearance of the great God, and "our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for "us, that by his blood and Spirit he might redeem "us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Labour to ſhew, that you are not only called by his name, but have ſat at his feet, and drank of his Spirit; and if, after all, unreaſonable and wicked men will ſpeak evil of you, and your good, be not moved at it, but pity and pray for them. When he ſhall return to vindicate your cauſe, and wipe away your reproach, then "every cloud ſhall be "removed, and the righteous ſhall ſhine forth as "the ſun in the kingdom of their Father *."

* Matth. xiii. 43.

SER.

SERMON XV.

THE EXTENT AND SANCTION OF THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

THE foundation of true religion is laid in a right knowledge of God and ourſelves. How deficient we are in each of theſe, how far fallen from original righteouſneſs, is ſtrongly implied in this prohibition; which would be wholly unneceſſary, if we were not wholly ſunk in ſtupidity and wickedneſs. That ſuch worms as we ſhould be liable to trifle with the Divine Majeſty, whoſe preſence fills the heavens and the earth, before whom the angels hide their faces; that ſuch frail dependent creatures have need to be cautioned, that we do not profane the name of the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, is a ſtriking proof of our depravity; and that we can dare to break through this caution, and ſlight the awful threatening with which it is cloſed, is a dreadful aggravation of our guilt.

Theſe words, when firſt ſpoken to the Iſraelites, were delivered in flames and thunder. The mountain ſhook, the people trembled; and even Moſes, who had been honoured with peculiar freedom of acceſs to God, was conſtrained to cry, "I exceedingly fear and quake *." Such a ſcene, or ra-

* Heb. xii. 21.

ther infinitely more dreadful, shall hereafter take place, "when the Lord himself shall again descend "from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the "archangel, and the trump of God; when he "shall be revealed in flaming fire, to take venge- "ance of all who know him not, and obey not "his gospel *." "Then shall sinners be convin- "ced not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all "their hard speeches which they have spoken "against him †;" and they shall know the full meaning of that terrible exception which I have read, "that the Lord will not hold him guiltless "that taketh his name in vain."

The terms of my text require little explanation. The name of God is in every one's mouth upon one occasion or other, in places where his revealed will is known. In a more eminent and peculiar sense his name is discovered to his believing people in Christ Jesus the Lord; those who know the name ‡ of God in Christ will put their trust in him; they dare not, they cannot blaspheme that holy name by which they are called. But I shall take it more extensively here; for though but few understand the name of God in an evangelical and saving sense, there is not a person in this assembly but knows and makes mention of his holy name, so far as to render them transgressors of this commandment. To take his name in vain, is to use it falsely or profanely, inconsiderately, without due reverence, or unprofitably, and without a suitable necessity. The sanction, "The Lord will not hold "him guiltless," has indeed a meaning and emphasis beyond what is expressed. Similar forms of speaking are frequent in scripture, as, "The Lord "will not spare that man ‖;" that is, he will punish

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.; 2 Thess. i. 8. † Jude. 15.
‡ Ps. ix. 10. ‖ Deut. xxix. 20.; 2 Pet. ii. 4. 5.

niſh him to the utmoſt; for it is immediately added, "All the curſes of this book ſhall come upon "him." Again, "He ſpared not the angels;" that is, he ſhewed them no mercy, as the following words declare: "He ſpared not the old world, he "viſited them with utter deſtruction, and ſwept "them all away with a flood." So, "he will not "hold him guiltleſs, implies two things: *1ſt*, That the Lord God has appointed a day to call ſinners to an account for their words as well as their actions. *2dly*, That whatever ſhall become of others, thoſe who have preſumed to take his name in vain, have their doom already determined. Whoever eſcapes, they ſhall ſurely be puniſhed; whoever acquits, he will certainly condemn them.

As the import of the expreſſions is not difficult, ſo likewiſe it will be far more eaſy than agreeable to point out ſome of the many ways in which this commandment is cuſtomarily and careleſsly broken. The law is general, and each particular precept is *ſpiritual* *; and perhaps this will be found of a more extenſive ſignification than ſome of you are aware. The delightful theme of a miniſter of the goſpel is to preach Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified; to open the treaſures of divine mercy, and to ſhew the grace, freeneſs, and ſecurity of the promiſes; to raiſe up them that fall, to ſtrengthen thoſe that ſtand; "to ſupport the weak, to comfort the "feeble-minded; to preach deliverance to the "captives, and the opening of the priſon to them "that are bound †." But theſe ſubjects do not compriſe *the whole* of our meſſage; and in general we find that the full ſoul loatheth the honey-comb ‡; and multitudes, through ignorance of the ſpirituality

* Rom. vii. 14. † 1 Theſſ. v. 14.; Luke, iv. 18.
‡ Prov. xxvii. 7.

lity and purity of God's holy law, and a partial judgement of their own hearts, can neither see the beauty nor the necessity of the gospel-salvation. We are therefore constrained frequently to insist on far less pleasing subjects, to lift up our voices like a trumpet *, to demand a general attention, while we attempt to shew our hearers their transgressions and their sins, that they may thereby make the doctrine of the cross of Christ welcome and desirable. It is painful to the patient, and without doubt unpleasing to the humane artist, to probe a deep and dangerous wound; but necessity commands, and without it a complete and lasting cure is not to be expected.

1. The first and most direct way in which the name of God is taken in vain, is by *Perjury*; that is, when he is expressly appealed to in confirmation of what is false, or when engagements are made as in his name and presence, which are not *strictly and literally complied with*. I need not take up your time in proving, that this is a *sin* of a deep *dye* in itself, and attended with peculiar aggravations under the light of the gospel; and I wish it was more difficult to prove the frequency of it in our land; but this likewise is as obvious as the light. I have sometimes met with a random assertion, that though we are wicked enough, we are not worse than other countries. In other things I am content to wave the parallel; but with respect to the sin of perjury, I fear we are much worse than any nation now under the sun, perhaps worse than any that the sun ever saw. I am afraid, there are *more* and *more daring* instances of this wickedness amongst us than in all the rest of Europe. By an unhappy kind of necessity, it is interwoven, as it were

* Is. lviii. 1.

were, with the very conſtitution of the body politic, and diffuſes itſelf like a deadly contagion amongſt all orders and ranks of people. Oaths are ſo exceſſively multiplied, and ſo generally neglected, that it is equally difficult and rare for a perſon to engage through a courſe of years, in any kind of employment, either civil or commercial, (O that it ſtopped even here!), without being enſnared. Some are ſo *expreſſed*, that it is morally impoſſible to comply with them; others ſo *circumſtanced*, that they are uſually ſwallowed without the remoteſt deſign of regarding them either in whole or in part. If here and there a few make conſcience of their engagements, and are deſirous to perform to the Lord their oaths *, or decline taking ſuch as open a door either to honour or profit, ſo ſtrong is the torrent the other way, that it is well if they eſcape the charge of ſingularity and preciſeneſs. Though wickedneſs of every kind too much abounds amongſt us, *perjury* is perhaps peculiarly and eminently our *national ſin;* and I tremble to think it is ſo; for it gives too juſt a ground to fear the approach of national judgements. Surely all who have any regard for the honour of God, any ſenſe of the worth of ſouls, will pray earneſtly that this iniquity may not be our ruin, but that the Lord would be pleaſed to inſpire and ſucceed the moſt proper means for the removal, or at leaſt the mitigation of this evil. This would be an event worthy to ſtand in the annals of the happy times and auſpicious government under which we live.

2. And though the matter of an oath be ſtrictly true, yet, if it is not tranſacted with a ſerious acknowledgement and homage of that Divine Being to whom appeal is made, ſuch an oath, however lawful and neceſſary it may be in itſelf, is, with regard

* Matth. v. 33.

gard to all such thoughtless triflers, no better than taking the name of God in vain. It cannot but be grievous to every serious mind, to observe the little reverence and solemnity, or rather the total want of common decency, which too frequently prevails among us in this respect, so that sometimes it is not easy to say, whether those who *tender* the oath, or those who *take* it, seem *least in earnest*. Without doubt this indifference may be assigned as one cause of the increase and prevalence of perjury. If those who are authorised to require or receive those solemn appeals, were themselves impressed with a due reverence of the awful majesty of God, and were solicitous to inspire all who came before them with the same sentiments, and would remind them (those especially who appear very positive and unguarded) of the impiety and danger of swearing falsely, it is possible many mischiefs would be prevented. Some persons would probably tremble and start back from the first temptation to this wickedness; and others might be deterred from persisting in it, who, for want of such admonitions and examples, and because they never saw any solemnity observed, precipitately rush upon this enormous evil, and are at length given up to a dreadful habit of wilful and corrupt perjury.

3. If an oath lawful and necessary in itself may thus become criminal through inconsideration, what shall we say of the throng of profane swearers, who wound our ears, and pollute our language, by a horrid mixture of execrations and blasphemies in their common conversation? "Their throats "are an open sepulchre: their mouths are full "of cursing and bitterness; the poison of asps is "under their lips *." This I have to say from the word of God, that the Lord will not hold them guiltless.

* Rom. iii. 13, 14.

guiltleſs. In vain their thoughtleſs plea, that they mean no harm: in vain their preſumptuous compariſon of themſelves with others, as though theſe were trivial eſcapes that did not affect the peace of ſociety. If theſe were ſmall ſins ſingly, their frequency would ſwell to a vaſt amount: but is it indeed a ſmall ſin to ruſh againſt the thick boſſes of God's buckler, and to deſpiſe ſo terrible a threatening as this? Surely, "the plague ſhall "never depart from the houſe of the ſwearer." "As he clotheth himſelf with curſing like as with "his garment; ſo it ſhall enter into his bowels like "water, and like oil into his bones*." A habit of ſwearing is a ſure ſign not only of an unſanctified heart, but of a conſcience hardened, and as it were ſeared with a hot iron, callous, and quite inſenſible.

4. Some perſons who ſcruple expreſsly to mention the name of God, accuſtom themſelves to ſwear by his creatures, by the heavens, by the light, or by their own ſouls, &c. But that this likewiſe is a direct violation of the law, and expoſes to the ſame penalties, we are aſſured by him who beſt knew how to explain his own commands. Our Lord determines this point in his ſermon on the mount, ſo as not to leave the poſſibility of a doubt. "I ſay unto you, Swear not at all; neither by "heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the "earth, for it is his footſtool.——Neither ſhalt "thou ſwear by thy head, becauſe thou canſt not "make one hair thereof white or black†." "And "whoſo ſhall ſwear by the temple, ſweareth by it, "and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that "ſhall ſwear by heaven, ſweareth by the throne of "God, and by him that ſitteth thereon." "But "let

* Pſ. cix. 17. 18. † Matth. v. 34.—36. ‡ Matth. xxiii. 21. 22.

" let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; " for whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of " evil." This deciſion evidently condemns, not only what is uſually deemed ſwearing, but the whole multitude of idle expletives, whether faſhionable or vulgar, which have the force of affirmations in common diſcourſe. Will any who live in a Chriſtian country, and have the Bible at hand, think to plead ignorance of theſe things in the great day?

5. If I ſhould ſtop here, ſome of you would applaud yourſelves, and perhaps not be diſpleaſed with me for what I have hitherto ſaid. Some who think themſelves clear thus far, will join with me in ſaying, " Becauſe of ſwearing, the land mourns *." But are there no other ways of taking the name of God in vain? Yes; many do it as often as they pray; and it is eaſily proved againſt numbers who join in our eſtabliſhed worſhip. Let each one conſider with what diſpoſitions and deſires they have engaged in the ſervice we have already gone through this day. Our mouths have all ſpoken the ſame things; but have they been the language of our hearts? In the confeſſion, we acknowledge, that there is no health in us, and ſpeak as if we were true penitents. In the communion-ſervice, we cry for mercy as miſerable ſinners; we pray that the thoughts of our heart may be cleanſed by the inſpiration of God's Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name; and for this we appeal to God, as to whom all hearts are open, all deſires known, and from whom no ſecrets are hid. More than a few of you, at certain ſeaſons, publicly declare, that the remembrance of your ſins is grievous, and the burden

* Jer. xxiii. 10.

burden of them is intolerable. Now, what apprehenſions can ſuch of you have of God as can dare to uſe his ſolemn language when your hearts mean no ſuch thing? Is not this to take his name in vain in the groſſeſt manner? Is it not plain that you think him altogether ſuch a one as yourſelves *; nay, more eaſily impoſed upon, and more fately to be trifled with, than a fallible mortal? Strange it is to think, that many can, not only content themſelves with this lip-ſervice, but make it the meritorious ground of their hope, and conceit themſelves religious becauſe they come ſo often to church to mock the power that made them! But hardly can any wickedneſs be imagined more daring, and more dreadfully provoking to the Moſt High, than ſuch a religion as this. To all ſuch worſhippers I may addreſs thoſe ſtriking words of St Peter to Ananias, "Thou haſt not lied unto men, but unto "God†."

6. The whole lives of thoſe who live in the allowed practice of known ſin, under the profeſſion of the Chriſtian name, may be conſidered as one continual breach of this command. In all you ſay and do, you blaſpheme that holy name by which you are called; and ſtill more ſo if you are declared friends and favourers of evangelical preaching. By your means, "the ways of truth are evil ſpo-"ken of‡." You give occaſion to thoſe offences of which it is ſaid, "Woe to that man by whom "the offence cometh." You injure the cauſe of Chriſt, ſtumble the weak in the faith, grieve the hearts of all who love the Lord, and make his enemies rejoice. "Better it would have been for "you never to have known the ways of righteouſ-"neſs,

* Pſ. l. 21. † Acts, v. 4.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 2.; Matth. xviii. 7.

"nefs *," than thus to abuſe your knowledge. You are now mingled with his faithful ſervants, as the chaff is blended with the wheat upon the floor †. But "behold the Judge ſtandeth at the "door." His fan is in his hand, he will thoroughly purge his floor; and when he gathers the wheat into his garner, you will be conſumed like ſtubble before the flame of his indignation. What diſtreſs and remorſe will ſeize your hearts, when you ſhall ſee them with whom you have often joined in the ſame ordinances, that have lived with you under the ſame roof, dined at the ſame table, perhaps ſlept in the ſame bed, when you ſhall ſee them received into the kingdom, and you yourſelves excluded, and thruſt into that utter darkneſs ‡, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth, for ever?

From this ſubject we may obſerve, by way of inference and application,

1. The truth and propriety of that ſcripture, "We know that what things ſoever the law ſaith, "it ſaith to them that are under the law; that "every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world "may become guilty before God ||." What perſon in this aſſembly can plead guiltleſs to every part of this charge? Muſt we not all ſtand ſilent and ſelf-condemned? And if you are a tranſgreſſor, what can you do, either to repair the diſhonour you have offered to the Divine Majeſty, or to prevent the contagious effects of your own evil example? Nothing can be more falſe, than a too frequent form of ſpeech among us: when a man of ſome amiable qualifications in ſocial life tramples without fear upon the laws of God, how often is it ſaid,

* 2 Pet. ii. 21.
† Matth. iii. 12.; James, v. 9.
‡ Luke, xiii. 28.
|| Rom. iii. 19.

ſaid, by way of extenuation, he is no one's enemy but his own! when indeed his practice declare him to be an enemy of God, an enemy to his holineſs and government; and he is a moſt miſchievous enemy to all who live under his influence, and within the circle of his acquaintance, by tempting and encouraging them to ſin, to the hazard of their ſouls. Things ſtanding thus with all men by nature, with what language can we anſwer the law's demands? Muſt we not adopt the pathetic confeſſion of the prophet? "For this our heart is faint; for "theſe things our eyes are dim. The crown is "fallen from our heads; woe unto us that we have "ſinned *!"

2. The neceſſity and value of the goſpel; otherwiſe how can you eſcape the penalty, and ſtand acquitted before the ſupreme Judge? If you refuſe this, "there remaineth no other ſacrifice for ſin †." But if you humble yourſelf, and apply to Jeſus, there is yet hope. He died for ſinners, the chief of ſinners, and the greateſt of ſins. For his ſake, all manner of ſin and blaſphemy is pardonable: "He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt." But he muſt do the whole, and have all the glory. Believe in his name. This is the firſt ſtep; without grace derived from him, you can do nothing. Remember his agony and bloody ſweat, his croſs and paſſion; and that he is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, on the behalf of thoſe who are ready to periſh. Let this be your plea and encouragement to draw near to a throne of grace. Pray for his Spirit to reveal his righteouſneſs, power, and love to your ſoul; and as your knowledge of him increaſes, your repentance will be more ſpiritual, evangelical, and effectual. Entreat him to enable you to forſake your

* Lam. v. 16. † Heb. x. 26.

your former evils, to set a guard upon the door of your lips, and to inspire you with an awful veneration of that holy name which you have hitherto profaned. He can teach your polluted lips to shew forth his praise.

And let the redeemed of the Lord, whom he has delivered from the guilt and power of this iniquity, adore the grace and mercy that has saved them. Look back upon your past lives, and rejoice with trembling. How often have you defied his vengeance and power, and perhaps madly uttered horrid imprecations against yourselves? Why have others been cut off in these sins, and you spared? Yes; "such were some of you: but ye are "washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the "name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our "God *." And now your tongues, which once uttered blasphemies almost with every breath, or, under a form of godliness, pronounced a language foreign to your hearts, delight in extolling the name of Jesus, and celebrating the wonders of redeeming love. Now, when you speak of the great God, your hearts are awed with an apprehension of his majesty, yet comforted with the thought that this God is your God, your almighty friend, your everlasting portion. Now you feel the influence of the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Fa-"ther." Little did you think in the days of your ignorance, that the God whom you was presumptuously offending had, in the counsels of his everlasting love, chosen you to salvation by Jesus Christ †. But he was found of you when you sought him not. He passed by you when you were lying in your blood, and bid you live. This was the secret reason why you

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† Eph. i. 4.; Is. lxv. 1.; Ezek. xvi. 6. 8.; Col. i. 13.

you could not deſtroy yourſelves. And at length his time of love came, the hour which he had appointed to open your eyes, to ſhew you mercy, to deliver you from the power of darkneſs, and to tranſlate you into the kingdom of his dear Son. Do not your hearts glow with a ſenſe of your obligations to him who hath loved you, and waſhed you from your ſins in his own blood? Will you not live to him who has ſaved you from ſo great a death? Yea, doubtleſs you will count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. You will uſe all your influence to diffuſe the ſavour of his precious name. You will take ſhame to yourſelves, and aſcribe glory to him. You will be zealous for his cauſe, and have a tender compaſſion for poor ſinners, who know not what they do, remembering, from your paſt experience, the miſery and gall of an unconverted ſtate. Let as many of us as have received mercy be thus minded; let it be our great ſtudy to ſhew forth the praiſes of him who has called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light, till the welcome hour ſhall arrive, when he will ſay to all who fear and love him, and long for his appearance, "Come, ye bleſſ-"ed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared "for you from the foundation of the world *."

* Matth. xxv. 34.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMPARED TO A RACE.

1 Cor. iv. 24.

——*So run that ye may obtain.*

THE ſcripture teaches us to derive profitable leſſons from common occurrences: and ſince we cannot avoid ſeeing and hearing the vanities of thoſe who know not God, unleſs we would go wholly out of the world, we may learn ſome inſtruction from them at a diſtance. The country of Greece, and eſpecially the neighbourhood of Corinth, was famous for trials of ſkill in a variety of exerciſes, ſuch as racing, wreſtling, fighting, and the like. And becauſe the children of the world are very wiſe in their generation, and ſpare no pains to accompliſh the point they have in view, the apoſtle would ſtir up believers to diligence from their example; and therefore, in ſeveral places, compares the Chriſtian life to one or other of the contells which were managed in the public games, and here particularly to a race. In theſe ancient races much ſolemnity was obſerved. The ground or courſe was exactly marked out; thoſe who were to run went through a ſtrict regimen and exerciſe beforehand; a vaſt concourſe of people were aſſembled as ſpectators; authoriſed judges were appointed to award the prize, which was a crown of laurel or oak-leaves, to the winner: and before they began, a herald publicly proclaimed the rules to be obſerved by the competitors; which unleſs ſtrictly complied with, all their pains and endeavours issued only in diſappointment and ſhame. To each

of

of these particulars the apostle alludes in different parts of his writings.

Let us, then, briefly consider wherein the allusion holds, and take notice of some things in which there is a remarkable difference.

I. That the Christian life is compared to a race, may intimate to us,

1. That it is a laborious and strenuous service, and incompatible with an indolent and careless frame of spirit. Not that we can do any thing of ourselves: in this sense, "it is not of him that "willeth, or of him that runneth*." But when a believer is animated by a view of Jesus, and the prize of the high calling, to run the race set before him, he finds that it demands his utmost strength, courage, and patience. A spectator may divert himself with the prospect, or the company; he may make observations upon what passes around him, and ride as softly as he pleases: but then he has no pretensions to the prize. But those who are actually candidates for it, may be easily distinguished without being pointed out: They have no leisure for amusement; their eyes are fixed, and their thoughts wholly engaged, upon what they have in hand; and they exert all their powers, and strain every nerve, to reach the goal. How inconsistent is the conduct of many professors! They enter the lists, they inform themselves of the rules, they even presume to expect the prize, though they idle away their whole lives, without once attempting to run in good earnest. Not so those who are taught and called of God: A sense of the worth of their souls, of the love of Christ, of the glory that shall be revealed, of their own weakness, and of the many obstacles that withstand their

* Rom. ix. 16.

progreſs, ſtirs them up to watchfulneſs, diligence, and prayer, and excites a holy jealouſy, "leſt, a "promiſe being made of entering into his reſt, "any of them ſhould come ſhort of it *."

2. That we ſhall ſtill preſs forward, and not reſt in what we have received. If a man ſets out in a race with the greateſt ſpeed, and ſeems to outſtrip all his antagoniſts; yet if he does not perſevere to the end, he will be ſure to loſe. The apoſtle alludes to a race in another place, where he ſays, "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reach-"ing forth to thoſe that are before †, I ſtretch for-"ward."—The Greek word beautifully expreſſes the earneſtneſs and energy of thoſe who run, and are determined to be firſt: they make no account of the ground already paſſed over, but exert themſelves to the utmoſt, labour with their hands and feet, and ſtrain every joint to the utmoſt, as though the whole ſucceſs depended on each ſingle ſtep. We ſee too many inſtances of perſons who begin warmly, and ſeem to run well for a ſeaſon; but they are hindered on their progreſs, ſlacken their pace firſt, and then ſtop ſhort. Take notice of the exhortation in my text: "So run that you may ob-"tain:" for it will be a dreadful diſappointment if you ſhould be ſet aſide diſapproved, when others receive the prize.

II. The heralds or criers in the Chriſtian race are the miniſters of the goſpel; and their proper name of office is expreſſed by the ſame word. They have it in charge to invite all to run, and to declare the preſcribed rules: and theſe muſt be carefully attended to; for *if*, or, as it might be rendered, *although a man ſtrive* ‡, although he wreſtle, and

* Heb. iv. 1. † Phil. iii. 13. 14. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 5.

and fight, and run, weary himſelf, and excel others; yet, after all, he loſes the prize, *he is not crowned, unleſs he ſtrive lawfully*, unleſs he ſtrictly conforms to the preſcribed regulations; he will be judged unqualified, though in other reſpects ſkilful and diligent, unleſs he runs in the limits marked out, fights with the uſual weapons, and obſerves in all points the diſcipline of the place. We are bound in duty, at the ſame time that we proclaim the race, and point out the prize to your view, to tell you, that without faith and holineſs * there can be no acceptance. And we cannot but be grieved to ſee how little theſe cautions are regarded by multitudes. Some are labouring, as it were in the fire, to eſtabliſh a righteouſneſs by their own works, and refuſe to believe in Chriſt for ſalvation. Others who profeſs indeed to believe in him, call themſelves his people, and affect to ſpeak highly of his goſpel, yet eventually deny him by their works and converſation. But unleſs you can alter the ſure determinations of the word of God, there muſt be an alteration in yourſelves; or elſe when you think you have attained, and ſhall confidently demand the prize, you will hear him ſay, "I know "you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity †."

There is a circumſtance in this reſemblance which I would not paſs over, becauſe it is peculiar to the Chriſtian race. The miniſters or heralds are not only to invite others, but are likewiſe to run themſelves. To this the apoſtle alludes, when he ſays, "Leſt, when I have preached to others, I ſhould "be myſelf a caſt-away ‡;" or be diſapproved of the Judge for breaking thoſe regulations himſelf which he had been authoriſed to propoudn to all.

* Mark, xvi. 16.; Heb. xii. 14. † Luke, xiii. 27.
‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

We have need to preach to ourselves no less than to you, and to entreat your prayers for us, that we may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God. And the caution may be proportionally extended to every one that is intrusted with any measure of gifts for the edification of the people of God. Keep close to his word; pray for his Spirit; be diligent and temperate in all things; and maintain a watchful jealousy over your own hearts: these are the means by which the Lord keeps his people from falling. But trust not to any outward talent, calling, or usefulness; for it is possible for a man to be instrumental to the good of others in families and societies, and yet to come short of the kingdom himself at last.

III. I have observed that a great concourse of spectators attended at the ancient games. The Christian, in his race and warfare, has likewise innumerable eyes upon him, a great cloud of witnesses. We are exhibited a spectacle to the world, to the whole universe, both to angels and to men *. Though he may be placed in an obscure situation, yet his neighbours at least will observe him, to see how his profession and practice agree. Invisible beings attend him in every step; the good angels † rejoice over the returning sinner, and it is probable, by God's appointment, support and refresh him in ways which are beyond our apprehension. The powers of darkness watch him with subtlety and envy, and go the utmost bounds of their commission, in their endeavours either to divert him from his course, or to make it uncomfortable to him. How should this thought both animate and humble every sincere soul! Be not discouraged, because to appearance you are almost left to serve God

* Cor. iv. 9. † Luke, xv. 10.

God alone. If the veil of flesh and blood could be drawn aside, you would see you are not alone; all the host of heaven are on your side; the glorious company that are before the throne of God, day without night, rejoicing, are engaged in your cause, and drink of the same fountain from which you are supplied. The spirits of just men made perfect, who are now all eye, all ear, all love, were once as you are, partakers of the same infirmities, sorrows, and cares; and you ere long shall be as they are, clothed with light, and freed from every burden. And Jesus, the Lord of angels, the King of saints, beholds your toil and conflict with complacence, and says, "Hold that fast which thou "hast, that no man take thy crown *." He is always near to succour, strengthen, and to save. Rejoice, therefore, that you run not as unnoticed, but rejoice with trembling. Be ashamed to think how disproportionate your efforts are to the company that behold you, and to the prize that awaits you. Remember likewise other eyes are upon you; Satan envies your privileges, and scorns your profession: he is every minute waiting permission to sift you as wheat †; he is incessantly spreading snares for your feet, and preparing his arrows against you; therefore be not high-minded, but fear, and give all diligence so to run that you may obtain.

IV. The Judge who presides at the end of the race is Jesus, the *Judge of all*. He holds forth the prize full in view to the eye of faith, and shall shortly crown the conqueror with his own hand. How sweetly does the apostle spiritualize upon this circumstance! "I have fought a good fight, I have

* Rev. iii. 11. † Luke, xxii. 31.

" finiſhed my courſe; I have kept the faith. " Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of " life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge," (who does not decide by appearances, nor can be influenced by partiality, as is too frequent among men), " ſhall give me at that day; and not to me " only, but to all who love his appearing *." Be of good cheer, believer; your caſe may be miſrepreſented, or miſunderſtood by men; but the Lord, the righteous and unerring Judge, will vindicate, approve, and reward in the great day, when he ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all them that believe.

THUS much concerning the reſemblance of the Chriſtian life to a race, to which the apoſtle alludes. I ſhall briefly take notice of ſome particulars in which the reſemblance fails; and a very intereſting and important difference may be obſerved,

1. In the reward. *The bodily exercise* † (employed in the games, for to theſe the apoſtle refers) *profited little:* a crown of oak or laurel, or ſome ſuch bauble, was their higheſt aim, and this the moſt of the competitors came ſhort of; for though all ran, *but one received the prize.* Of little more value, and equal uncertainty, is the prize that has engaged the time and thoughts of many. *But godliness* (the whole courſe and conflict in which the believer is engaged) *is profitable for all things*, or in every view, having promiſes to ſupport the life that now is, and to crown that which is to come. " He that overcometh, ſaith the Lord, ſhall inhe- " rit all things. I will be his Father, and he ſhall " be my ſon. I will give him to eat of the tree of " life, which is in the midſt of the paradiſe of " God.

* 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8. † 1 Tim. iv. 8.

" God. I will make him a pillar in the temple of " my God, and he shall go no more out; yea, I " will grant him to sit down with me in my " throne *." The Lord will give grace here, and will with-hold no good thing from those who walk uprightly; and hereafter he will crown grace with glory, and place his servants out of the reach of every trouble and enemy, in the kingdom which his love has prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. " Having therefore these " promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves " from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfect- " ing holiness in the fear of the Lord †."

2. In races, though many run, one only can receive the prize. But thanks be to God, it is not so in the Christian race. All who run as the Lord has appointed, shall be sure to win. No opposition can prevail against them, nor will the number of the candidates be any diminution to the happiness of each individual. The inheritance of the saints in light, like the light of the sun, is not diminished by being shared amongst many; each one possesses the whole, in the same perfection as he could do, if there was none to enjoy it but himself.

3. In the races the apostle alludes to, none were compelled to run. The proclamation was general; but those who did not chuse to engage, suffered no disadvantage. But it is not so in the race to which you are invited by the gospel. The Lord is greatly offended with those who slight the message, and refuse to enter the lists. If you only give his ministers a hearing, and return to your ‡ farms and merchandise, forget the worth of your precious souls, and suffer your thoughts to be engrossed with the cares and pleasures of this life, to the neglect

* Rev. ii. 7.; iii. 12, 21.; xxii. 7. Ps. lxxxiv. 11.
† 2 Cor. vii. 1. ‡ Matth. xxii. 5.

of this one thing needful, the Lord will account it a contempt offered to himself, and will ere long call you before his tribunal to answer for it.

4. Those who run, and did not win the prize, only lost their labour, or at the worst were exposed to shame; but they were liable to no positive punishment. But you who are professors of the gospel, if you come short at last, will be lost for ever. "So run that you may obtain." Be not content with having set out; the promise is made to perseverance. "He that endureth to the end shall be "saved*;" but if any draw back, or stop short, the Lord will have no pleasure in them. They will not only lose the prize, but will receive a heavy and aggravated doom. It would have been better for them not to have known the ways of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. If you were forced to run for your lives, you would be very thoughtful about the event. But if you are not found amongst those who come in for the prize of eternal life, you will be cast into outer darkness, and sink under the curse of God for ever.

Fain therefore would I persuade you to address yourselves with earnestness to run the race set before you. Flee from approaching wrath. The wrath of God is already revealed against all unrighteousness, and soon it will be poured forth upon the head of every transgressor. Though God is patient and forbearing, he is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his glittering sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he hath ordained his arrows against those who shall finally disobey his great command,

* Matth. x. 22.; Heb. x. 38.

command, to receive the goſpel of his grace. It is impoſſible to elude his eye, or to withſtand his power. You are upon the brink of danger, if you are not already entered in this race; you ſtand upon a precipice, and hell from beneath has opened its mouth to receive you. But a reſpite is ſtill afforded; the Lord waits to be gracious; and as yet there is room. The gate of mercy is not yet ſhut; "turn therefore to the ſtrong hold, as pri-"ſoners of hope;" no longer refuſe his gracious invitation, or triſle with your precious ſouls; ſeek to Jeſus that you may live; apply to him for faith and repentance; and, in his ſtrength and name, prepare to run this important race. Meditate upon the glorious prize, which is provided for all who endure to the end; it is freely propoſed to all who run. Pardon, grace, and eternal life, are promiſed and beſtowed, without money and without price. If, after ſo many repeated calls, you ſtill harden your hearts, and ſtop your ears, and determine that you will not come unto Jeſus, that you may have life, you muſt aſſuredly periſh, without mercy, and without excuſe.

But if you are deſirous to run, remember the admonition in my text, "So run that you may "obtain." Your ſteps muſt be regulated by the word of God, or you will wander wide from the good old way; you muſt derive your ſufficiency and ſtrength from Chriſt by faith and prayer, or you will faint, and be unable to endure to the end. We read of ſome * that run well for a ſeaſon, but were afterwards hindered, and turned aſide. Be upon your guard; for there are many that will ſtrive to divert you from your courſe. Satan, the world, and your own evil hearts, will combine and form various attempts to ſlacken your pace, and to

* Gal. v. 7.

withdraw your attention from the one thing needful. Dread the thoughts of ſtopping ſhort, or turning back; and the more you meet with oppoſition, be ſo much the more earneſt to redouble your diligence, and eſpecially to cry mightily to him who is able to keep you from falling, to preſerve you unblameable in love while here, and at laſt to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Believers, why are not we as wiſe in our generation as the children of the world? We ſee how thoſe who are fond of a common horſe-race are thinking and talking of it, and preparing for it every day. Does not their diligence ſhame us, who are ſo cold, faint, and dilatory, in the moſt important and honourable concerns? Let us gird up the loins of our mind: ſome of you have not far to run now; you have taken many a weary ſtep ſince you were firſt called; but the end is at hand; the period of your complete ſalvation is now much nearer than when you firſt believed *. Think of Jeſus the forerunner and the judge; he has already entered within the vail for us, his eye is upon us, he is near to aſſiſt, and waiting to receive us. May his Spirit and his example animate us to preſs forward to the prize of our high calling, to tread down every difficulty, and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life †.

* Rom. xiii. 11. † Rev. ii. 10.

SER-

SERMON XVII.

NO ACCESS TO GOD BUT BY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

MICAH, vi. 6. 7. 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

THERE is no queſtion that can ariſe in the mind of man, that is of ſo high importance as this in my text, and yet, alas! how ſeldom is it laid to heart! May the Spirit of God impreſs it upon all your conſciences. You are now come before God to worſhip; aſk yourſelves, wherewith? On what do you ground your hope, that you offer him acceptable ſervice? You muſt ſhortly appear before him in judgement. Are * you prepared to meet him? What plea have you provided? Take heed in time. Be ſure that it is ſuch a one as he will admit, leſt your hopes ſhould fail, and you periſh in his preſence as chaff before the devouring flame.

The paſſage plainly expreſſes the inquiry of an

* Amos, iv. 12.

awakened mind. It is to be feared many of you have often read these words without being suitably affected with their meaning. But if you can indeed make them your own, if you are truly solicitous how you are to come before God both here and hereafter, I hope his good Spirit will enable you to receive satisfaction from the answer given by the prophet.

If you can speak these words from your heart, you will readily acknowledge that they imply the following things.

1. A sense of duty; that you are under an obligation to come and bow before the High God. You are sensible that you ought not, and you find that you cannot live without paying him homage and worship, but that he has a right to your service, and expects it. Too many shew, in this respect, that they are dead while they live, dead to God, insensible and regardless of their many obligations to him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being. They live without prayer; they offer no praises to the God of their lives, but rise up and lie down, go out and come in, without one reflection on his power, goodness, and providence, even like the beasts that perish. But the awakened soul cannot do so. He trembles to think, that he once could neglect that God, whom all the hosts of heaven worship, and is convinced, that however fair his character might have been amongst men, he justly deserved to have been struck to hell for so long restraining prayer before God.

2. A sense of the majesty and glory of God. Whoever seriously asks this question, has an awful view of the Lord, as the High God. Many who do not wholly neglect prayer and worship, yet have no spiritual and humbling apprehensions of the

the God whom they profess to serve. Their prayers, whether in public or private, are only lip-service, as though they thought him altogether such a one as themselves. Their petitions are not guided by their desires, but they utter with their mouths what they find in the book, though their hearts have no love or relish of the things they ask for. How often is God mocked by those who join in our established worship? Has he not been so this morning by some of you? How little he is reverenced by many, is plain from the little regard they pay to his commands. They will break his Sabbaths, blaspheme his name, live in drunkenness, whoredom, anger, and malice, and yet pretend to worship him. But those who rightly understand the inquiry in my text, cannot do thus. They consider him as the High God; they know that he humbles himself to behold even the worship of heaven, and are therefore struck with this thought, Wherewith can I, a poor worm, who am but dust and ashes, come before this High God?

3. A sense of guilt. Alas! says the soul that is enlightened to see itself, I am not only *mean*, but *vile*. "I have sinned, but what shall I do unto "thee, O thou preserver of men *?" Wherewith shall such a polluted obnoxious creature as I am appear before a holy God? Can my services atone for my sins, or what service can I perform that is not defiled and rendered unworthy of acceptance by the evil of my heart? But could I perform ever so well from this day forward, what would this avail for what is past? If I had offended a man like myself, I might think of making some amends; but my sins are against God. His justice, wisdom, holiness, and truth, have all demands upon

* Job, vii. 20.

on me. What then can I bring? Will sacrifices appease him? No; these, though of his own appointment, are not of themselves sufficient. "It is not "possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take "away sins *." Though all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, were mine, though I should offer all Lebanon, hills of frankincense, rivers, yea, ten thousands of rivers of oil, all would not do. Or should I give my son, my only son, the fruit of my body, neither would this atone for the sin of my soul.

Here, then, you may see, that to an awakened sinner sin is the heaviest burden imaginable. He is willing, and would be glad, (if it might be), to purchase the pardon of sin with the loss of every thing he accounts most valuable. If he had the whole world, he would freely part with it to be free from guilt. But at the same time he finds it a burden that he cannot shake off; he knows that he never can be delivered for any thing he can do or propose, and therefore the great subject of inquiry always upon his mind is, Wherewith or how shall I appear and stand before the High God?

I hope some of you are thus minded; to you I have a comfortable message from the other part of my text. But as I cannot hope thus of you all, I must previously take notice, that there is hardly any one passage in the Bible more generally misunderstood, and which ignorant and careless men are more prone to wrest to their own destruction, than the verses under our present consideration. Not a few, having their eyes blinded by the god of this world, and their hearts enslaved to the love and practice of sin, are content to understand it as if it was rather a rebuke than an encouragement to

* Heb. x. 4.

to them, who, like * the jailor, are deeply affected with a concern for the salvation of their souls. Their comment is to this purpose, "He hath "shewed thee, O man, what is good;" that is, you need not terrify yourself at this rate; there is nothing so evil in sin, or so awful in God's threatenings, as you suppose. He has said, indeed, "the soul that sinneth, shall die †;" yet here you see an easy way to escape, "Do justly," (which is, being interpreted), Do not grosly cheat and injure your neighbour; abstain from robbery, extortion, and heavy oppression, and "love mercy;" that is, be ready to do what are commonly called good-natured offices, and to give a shilling, or a guinea, (according to your circumstances), now and then to the poor, and you will be safe enough. How they explain the other clause, "walk humbly," upon this plan, I confess myself unable to conceive, and therefore I believe they are glad to omit it; for I am sure light cannot be more contrary to darkness, than such language as this is opposite to the idea of walking humbly with God.

According to this opinion, to do justly, and to love mercy, are the whole of religion. They are indeed essential parts of it; and miserable will you be who talk in this strain, if God, at the great day, should judge you by this text to which you now presumptuously appeal. How wonderful is the pride and arrogance of fallen man, who will dare to urge a plea before God which must issue in his own confusion! Do you indeed deal justly? It implies something more than not being an arrant knave. Do you at all times, and in all respects, behave to every person as you would they should do unto you? Did you never take the least advantage of the ignorance or necessity of your

* Acts, xvi. 30. † Ezek. xviii. 4.

your neighbour? Did you never ſpeak or report any thing to his prejudice, without ſufficient warrant and ſufficient cauſe? You feel how tender you are of your own character and intereſts. Have you been equally tender of the intereſts of others, of all others with whom you have had connections, without being influenced in any inſtance or degree by partiality or mercenary views? If you cannot appeal to the Searcher of hearts that you have walked in this integrity, your pretence that you have done juſtly is vile hypocriſy, and you may tremble to think how eaſily you may be condemned out of your own mouth. Alas! if God, to whom all your thoughts and actions have been inceſſantly expoſed, ſhould enter into judgement with you, how unable would you be to anſwer him in one of a thouſand!

Again, Do you love mercy? Do you *love* it as a miſer loves money? Is it the pleaſure of your hearts to overcome evil with good? If your brother or neighbour offend you, not ſeven times, but ſeventy times ſeven*, do you find it delightful to repeat your forgiveneſs, to bleſs them that curſe you, to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and to requite repeated injuries with repeated acts of kindneſs? If not, what have you to do with mercy, either to pretend that you love mercy yourſelf, or to indulge a hope of obtaining mercy from God, if you knew no better way of ſeeking it than by your own works. But ſuppoſe you was leſs culpable in theſe particulars, can you ſay that you walk humbly with God? Alas! how impoſſible is this, while you truſt in your own righteouſneſs, while you ſlight and deſpiſe his threatenings, while your hearts riſe againſt his goſpel! Are you not impatient under the afflictions which

* Matth. xviii. 22.

which he sends, and unthankful for innumerable mercies which he is daily bestowing upon you? And is this to walk humbly with God? Bear with me for a plain word, which I purposely speak plainly that it may not be forgot: I say, that if any man or woman can be saved in this way, that is, upon the account of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, then Satan himself has no cause to despair.

I return now to those who see and acknowledge themselves to be sinners, without righteousness and strength, and are desirous to appear before God with comfort. To you I bring good tidings; the Lord help you to believe and rejoice. He hath shewed you that which is good, which is the only and sufficient ground whereon to build your hopes; he has shewed or revealed it, for otherwise you could never have found it out. What the law cannot do, in that it is weak and ineffectual through the flesh, God has done by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh *. The Lord Jesus Christ is that *good* to which the prophet refers; Moses and the prophets, and all the scriptures, testify of him, and Micah among the rest. One of the most illustrious testimonies to the person and office of our Emmanuel in the Old Testament, is to be found in the chapter preceding my text. "But thou, "Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little "among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee "shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler "in Israel; whose goings forth have been from "of old, from everlasting. And he shall stand "and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the "majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and "they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto "the

* Rom. viii. 3.

"the ends of the earth. And this man shall be "the peace *." All other sacrifices and saviours are insufficient; but Jesus, by the one offering of himself once offered up, hath made a full, perfect, and everlasting atonement, and now he reigns in our nature, possessed of all the fulness of grace, exercising the power of God in the salvation of men. Would you then come before the High God? come in the name of Jesus, and you shall find acceptance. In him God is well pleased †; and for his sake he is well pleased with all who honour his beloved Son, and put their trust in him. He has authority and compassion sufficient to save the most deplorable and the most unworthy. If you read the history of his life and death, you will read of a display of love and grace beyond expression; and he is the same still. Before he ascended, he left an assurance for your encouragement, that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. If you say, I want faith, remember it is his gift, and he has promised to do whatever you ask in his name. Therefore fight against unbelief, resist Satan with the sword of the Spirit. If it is suggested that you are a great sinner, you cannot deny it, *nor need you*; avow the charge, take shame to yourselves, and give glory to God; but it is equally true, that Jesus is a great Saviour, he is able to save to the uttermost; and though your iniquities are great, yet cast not away your hope, for his mercy is greater than the heavens.

When you come in this way, what does the Lord require of you? Is it to make your own peace? He would as soon require you to make a new heaven and a new earth. Is it to keep your own soul? No more than he requires you to keep the

* Micah, v. 2.—5. † Matth. iii. 17.

the sun in its course. His own arm has wrought salvation, and he will secure it. He requires none of your help here; nay, he disdains the thought: you might as well offer to help him to govern the world. But this he requires of you, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy "God;" and the methods of his grace will enable you to do so.

1. "To do justly." We are by nature attached to worldly goods, and wholly influenced by selfish principles. But faith in Jesus communicates new motives, views, and aims, to the soul: it teaches us to have our treasure in heaven; to sit loose to the world; to be satisfied with that station and competence which Divine Providence has allotted us; and to love our neighbours as ourselves, because they are our fellow-sinners, and are capable of being called to a participation with us, in the honourable relation and privilege of the children of God. Upon these principles the practice of justice is attainable, but upon no other; for though there are many characters honourable and blameless in the outward concerns of life, and in the judgement of men, there is no person upon earth who does or can love or practise justice in its full extent, till he has received the Spirit of Christ, and lives upon him by faith, for wisdom and strength from day to day.

2. "To love mercy." None can truly love it but those who have tasted it. When your hearts feel the comforts of God's pardoning love, you will delight to imitate him. When you can truly rejoice that he has freely forgiven you that immense debt, which is expressed by ten thousand talents *, you will have no desire to take your fellow-servant by the throat for a few pence. This sense of God's goodness,

* Matth. xviii. 24.

goodneſs, and the continual need you find of his renewed mercy from day to day, will ſoften your ſpirit, (if you are a believer), diſarm and gradually weaken every proud thought that would plead for the exerciſe of anger and reſentment towards thoſe who have offended you. You will be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to wrath; you will put on (as the beloved of God) bowels of meekneſs *, long-ſuffering, and compaſſion, forbearing and forgiving, if you have ought againſt any; becauſe God for Chriſt's ſake has freely forgiven you. If you find this practice difficult, it is owing partly to the remaining depravity of your nature, and partly becauſe you have had but a faint ſenſe of his mercy. Pray for a more powerful manifeſtation of it, and you will do better; mercy will be your delight.

3. "To walk humbly." "Can two walk toge-"ther except they are agreed †?" When Chriſt is your peace, you will delight in God; you will ſet him before you, commune with him, ſtudy to pleaſe him, and to keep all his commandments. This is to *walk* with God; and you will walk *humbly*, remembering how much you owe to free grace, and how far you fall ſhort in your beſt endeavours. Theſe conſiderations, impreſſed by the Holy Spirit, will humble you, will keep you from being high in your own eſteem, wiſe in your own conceit, and from ſeeking great things for yourſelf. You will be habitually thankful when the Lord gives, content when he with-holds, patient when he afflicts. You will confeſs yourſelf unworthy of the ſmalleſt mercies you poſſeſs, and acknowledge in your heavieſt trials, that he has laid far leſs upon you than your iniquities have deſerved.

This is the pattern we are to copy after, and this is the certain tendency and effect of his grace. A meaſure

* Col. iii. 12. † Amos, iii. 3.

measure of this disposition is found in all who are Christians indeed. Yet we may take shame to ourselves, that we are still so far defective in every branch of our duty. Let us stir up ourselves to greater diligence, watchfulness, and prayer, that we may obtain more lively, abiding, and transforming views of that which is our true good, that so we may be enabled to glorify our heavenly Father, and to adorn our profession, by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

OF A LIVING AND A DEAD FAITH.

JAMES, ii. 26.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

WHOEVER has read the scriptures with attention, must have observed several passages, which, at first view, and till thoroughly examined and compared, appear hard to reconcile to each other. No instance of this sort is more remarkable than the seeming difference of judgement between St Paul and St James on the point of justification. St Paul having said, "That a man is justified by faith "without the deeds of the law *," produces the example of Abraham to confirm his assertion. St James, (in the chapter before us), from the example of the same Abraham, draws a conclusion which seems directly to contradict this: "Ye see then "how that by works a man is justified, and not by "faith only †." Can any two opinions be more opposite in appearance? How then can both be true, or how can we believe both writers infallible in their doctrine, and influenced by the unerring Spirit of God? Must we cleave to the one, and reject the other? and if so, how shall we know which is the real truth?

We may confidently answer, The apostles are both right: their doctrine is equally from God, and does not clash in any particular. The darkness and difficulty is in the apprehensions of men, and not

* Rom. iii. 28. † James, ii. 24.

not in the word of God. Yet a difficulty there is, and I hope I ſhall not detain you unprofitably at this time, by endeavouring to clear it, and afterwards to preſs upon you the words of my text as a proper inference from the whole.

When men who are ſtrangers to Chriſtian experience, and who truſt more to their own ſagacity and learning than to the word and Spirit of God, attempt to reſolve caſes of this ſort, they make ſtrange work. And it is no wonder; for how can any one explain what he does not underſtand? It would tire you if I ſhould relate a tenth part of the conjectures of learned men upon this very ſubject. I ſhall mention one or two as a ſpecimen. A writer of ſome eminence in the world, confeſſes the difficulty I have noticed in its full ſtrength. He allows and affirms, that it is not only hard but impoſſible to reconcile the apoſtles to each other; and concludes, that ſince it is impoſſible to hold both their ſentiments, we muſt abide by him who wrote the laſt. This, from many arguments his learning furniſhed him with, he thinks to have been St James. Accordingly, he gives up the other, and his doctrine of faith without works, to ſhift for themſelves. He ſuppoſes that St Paul, in the heat of his argument, carried the matter a little too far, and that St James wrote afterwards to correct him.

But to ſhew you (excuſe a familiar expreſſion) how doctors differ, and at the ſame time to warn even true believers againſt haſtily judging beyond the line of their experience, I would obſerve, that the great ſervant of God, Luther, ſoon after he began to preach the goſpel, made a miſtake no leſs bold and preſuming on the other ſide of the queſtion. He had felt the power of St Paul's doctrine in his own ſoul, and would have defied an angel that would have dared to oppoſe it; therefore, when

when his adverſaries preſſed him with the authority of St James, not having at that time light to give a more ſolid anſwer, he ventured to deny the authenticity of the whole epiſtle, and raſhly inſiſted, both in his ſermons and books, that St James never wrote it. But Luther, though miſtaken in this point, was under the Lord's teaching; he went on from ſtrength to ſtrength, increaſing in knowledge and grace; and when his judgement was better informed, he publicly retracted his former unguarded aſſertion.

Leaving, therefore, the authority of men, let us betake ourſelves to the word of God, and humbly ſeek the light of his Spirit, who is promiſed to guide his people in their ſincere inquiries after truth.

Now, if you conſider the ſcope and deſign of our apoſtles, and take in the context, I hope this ſeeming oppoſition will be ſoon removed. St Paul is evidently treating on the great point of a ſinner's juſtification in the ſight of God; he ſhews that it cannot be of the law, becauſe by the law all men were already condemned, and becauſe then boaſting could not be excluded, but that it was freely by grace, through the redemption that is by Chriſt Jeſus. His reaſoning will appear to greater advantage by peruſing the whole paſſage, than by producing a few detached ſentences. After he had ſummed up the evidence with reſpect both to Jews and Gentiles, and pronounced his verdict, that every mouth muſt be ſtopped, and that the whole world ſtood guilty before God, he proceeds thus: "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there ſhall no "flesh be juſtified in his ſight: for by the law is "the knowledge of ſin. But now the righteouſneſs of God without the law is manifeſted, being "witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the "righteouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus "Chriſt

" Chriſt unto all, and upon all them that believe ;
" for there is no difference : For all have ſinned,
" and come ſhort of the glory of God : Being juſ-
" tified freely by his grace, through the redemp-
" tion that is in Jeſus Chriſt : Whom God hath ſet
" forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his
" blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſ-
" ſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbear-
" ance of God ; to declare, I ſay, at this time his
" righteouſneſs ; that he might be juſt, and the juſ-
" tifier of him which believeth in Jeſus. Where is
" boaſting then ? It is excluded. By what law ?
" of works ? Nay ; but by the law of faith.
" Therefore we conclude, that a man is juſtified
" by faith without the deeds of the law *." And
becauſe the Jews had a high opinion of Abraham,
he proceeds in the next chapter to ſhew that Abra-
ham was juſtified in the ſame way. " For what
" ſaith the ſcripture ? Abraham believed God,
" and it was counted unto him for righteouſneſs.
" Now to him that worketh, is the reward not rec-
" koned of grace, but of debt. But to him that
" worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth
" the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſ-
" neſs †." The circumſtance in Abraham's life re-
ferred to is, when he believed the promiſe of God,
that though he was then childleſs, he ſhould be the
father of many nations ‡, and that particularly from
him ſhould proceed the Meſſiah, the promiſed ſeed,
in whom both he himſelf and all the families of the
earth ſhould be bleſſed.

St James expreſsly treats of thoſe who reſted in
a notion which they called faith, and accounted
ſufficient for their ſalvation, though it had no in-
fluence upon their hearts, tempers, and conduct.

* Rom. iii. 20.—28. † Rom. iv. 3—5.
‡ Gen. xii. 3. ; xvii. 4.

He shews that their hope is vain, because such a faith as this the devils have. And he proves by the example of Abraham, that his faith was very different from theirs, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience, the offering up of his only son. "What doth it profit, "my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, "and have not works? can (this) * faith save him? "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of "daily food; and one of you say unto them, De- "part in peace, be you warmed, and filled; not- "withstanding ye give them not those things which "are needful to the body; what doth it profit? "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, be- "ing alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast "faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith with- "out thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by "my works. Thou believest that there is one "God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, "and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man! "that faith without works is dead? Was not A- "braham our father justified by works, when he "had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest "thou how faith wrought with his works, and by "works was faith made perfect? And the scrip- "ture was fulfilled, (confirmed), which saith, A- "braham believed God, and it was imputed unto "him for righteousness: and he was called the "friend of God. Ye see then how that by works "a man is justified, and not by faith only †." It is exceedingly plain that he had not the same thing in view which St Paul had; for the incident to which he here refers, happened a great many years after Abraham had been declared justified in the sight of God.

The sum is, the one declares that nothing ren- ders

* ἡ πίστις, *this* faith. † James, ii. 14.—24.

ders us acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that such a faith, when true and genuine, is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work. The one speaks of the justification of our persons, this is by faith only; the other of the justification of our profession, this is by faith, not alone, but working by love, and producing obedience.

St James has the same view in speaking of Rahab*; and by producing her as a confirmation, it is still more evident, that he is only considering works as the proofs of our sincerity. We have no sure ground to conclude, that Rahab, in the act of receiving the spies, and at that time, had any saving faith, or any view to the Messiah and the covenant of grace; though it is most probable she had, after she was joined to the people of Israel, and became acquainted with divine revelation. But in Jericho her thoughts seem to have been confined to a temporal deliverance; and the profession of faith which she made to the spies implies no more. "And she "said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath "given you the land, and that your terror is fallen "upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land "faint because of you. For we have heard how "the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for "you, when you came out of Egypt; and what "you did unto the two kings of the Amorites.—— "And as soon as we had heard these things, our "hearts did melt; neither did there remain any "more courage in any man, because of you: for "the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, "and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray "you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have "shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kind-"ness unto my father's house; and give me a

* James, ii. 25.

"true token*." Had she said thus, and yet delivered the spies up to the king of Jericho, it would have proved, that she did not speak from her heart; but her profession was justified by receiving them into her house, concealing them from the search made after them, and sending them away in peace. Surely this conduct of Rahab will be sufficient to condemn many who would be thought Christians.

We may therefore deduce two propositions, perfectly consistent with each other, from the passage in question.

1. That there is no acceptance for any of the sons of Adam with the just and holy God, but through Jesus Christ as our righteousness received by faith; and that in this concern works of every kind are absolutely excluded.

This is the capital doctrine of the gospel; it is not only clearly asserted in innumerable passages both of the Old Testament and the New, but is St Paul's express subject and design in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Though he was yielding and compliant in many things of less importance, and was willing to become all things to all men, yet he would not give place, no not for an hour, to any who offered to invalidate this foundation-truth. He declares, that to mix any thing, to contend for any qualification or observance, as of necessary influence, to concur with the perfect work of Christ in the justification of a sinner, is to darken, alter, and destroy the gospel which he preached; and denounces an anathema against every one who should be guilty of this presumption, yea, though he should be (if such † a thing was possible) an angel from heaven. How cordially

* Joshua, ii. 9.—12. † Gal. i. 8, 9.

cordially he reſted his own hope upon the truth which he propoſed to others, he declares elſewhere, "Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt "Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have ſuffered the "loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, "that I may win Chriſt; and be found in him *, "not having mine own righteouſneſs, which is of "the (*a*) law, but that which is through the faith "of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs of God by faith."

If this is the ſcriptural doctrine, let each one examine on what ground you ſtand. Has God appointed one way of ſalvation? and will any of you dare to propoſe another? This would be both wicked and dangerous: "Other foundation can "no man lay than that which is laid, which is Je-"ſus Chriſt †." You may pleaſe yourſelves now with what you account your good works; but when God ſhall "lay judgement to the line, and righ-"teouſneſs to the plummet ‡," none will be able to abide his appearance, but thoſe who can plead a righteouſneſs perfectly anſwerable to the law's demands, which can only be found in Jeſus Chriſt, the righteous one.

And as this doctrine is of ſo great and eſſential importance, beware how you liſten to any other. Take heed how you hear ‖; be not influenced by the names, characters, or ſtations of men, when the ſalvation of your ſouls is at ſtake. Prize the

 liberty,

* Phil. iii. 8. 9.

(*a*) Ἐκ νόμου of law: that is, of *any law whatſoever*, not of *the* law, as if he only meant the Jewiſh law. The article τῦ ſeems here to be purpoſely left out.

† 1 Cor. iii. 11. ‡ Iſ. xxviii. 17.
‖ Mark, iv. 24.; Luke, viii. 18.

liberty, which as Proteſtants and Britons you enjoy, of bringing every doctrine to the trial of God's word, and freely uſe it. I account it my honour and happineſs that I preach to a free people, who have the Bible in their hands. To your Bibles I appeal. I intreat, I charge you, to receive nothing upon my word, any farther than I prove it from the word of God; and bring every preacher, and every ſermon that you hear, to the ſame ſtandard. If this is the truth, you had need to be well eſtabliſhed in it; for it is not the current and faſhionable doctrine of the times. Let me then further recommend to you, (it is a direction our Lord has given), to examine doctrines by their effects: "By their fruits ye ſhall know them *." The truths of God, when faithfully preached, in humble dependence upon his bleſſing, will be atteſted by his power. At ſuch times, and in ſuch places, a viſible change will ſoon be obſervable in ſome one or other of the hearers: they ceaſe to do evil, they learn to do well: they acknowledge God in all their ways, and glorify him before men, by living according to his precepts. And if you aſk them the reaſon of this change, they will freely aſcribe it to the bleſſing of God upon that foolſ of preaching, which by too many is accounted foolihneſs †.

On the other hand, we are not afraid to challenge thoſe who are moſt acquainted with men and books, to produce inſtances of the ſame effects wrought by any other doctrine than that which commends the Lord Chriſt in his perſon, offices, and power, as the only object of a ſinner's hope. How much is ſaid and wrote to tell people what they ſhould be, and what they ſhould do! yet where theſe principles are not enforced, there is nothing

* Matth. vii. 16. † 1 Cor. i. 21.

thing effectually done, nothing indeed attempted, beyond a formal round of dull and heartless service; a little something that looks like religion on the Lord's day to appear in church at the summons of the bell, to repeat words because other people do the same, to hear what is delivered from the pulpit with little attention or affection, unless something occurs that is suited to exalt self, or to soothe conscience, and then to run with eagerness into the world again.

Or if here and there a person is truly touched by the secret influence and guidance of the Spirit of God, where this evangelical doctrine is not publicly maintained, the consequence always is, that they renounce the things which they before held for truths, are brought into that way of thinking which is agreeable to St Paul's doctrine, and receive it gladly whenever it comes in their way.

It must be allowed, however, at the same time, that there are counterfeit professors, whose religion lies in notions, and who, while they profess to believe in God, in works deny him; by reason of whom the ways of truth are evil spoken of *. This the apostles have taught us to expect; nay, it was so from the beginning, even while the apostles were themselves personally with the churches. To such St James addresses the passage I have been reading to you, of which my text is the conclusion; and as I dare not hope that there are none such in this great assembly, it is highly proper, that before I conclude I should take notice of a second proposition which naturally offers from the subject we have had in hand; and more especially from the reasoning of St James, and from the words of my text.

2. That true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has

* 2 Pet. ii. 2.

a prevailing and habitual influence upon the hearts and lives of thoſe who poſſeſs it; and that they are vain men, and deceivers of themſelves, who pretend to faith in him, while their lives and converſations ſhew them to be enſlaved to the love of the world, and the dominion of ſin. The apoſtle, to inſpire us with a juſt abhorrence of this falſe profeſſion, makes uſe of two compariſons which are exceedingly ſtriking. May God open the eyes of thoſe who are concerned in it, to perceive and tremble at the juſtneſs and horror of the reſemblance.

1*ſt*, He compares it to the faith of devils: "Thou "believeſt there is one God; thou doſt well. The "devils alſo believe, and tremble *." Are there any here whom it is needful to addreſs in this harſh manner? My dear brethren, bear with me; I wiſh you well, and would willingly rejoice in every good appearance; but, alas! how little does it ſignify what you believe, or what you ſay, unleſs your acknowledged principles have an effect upon your conduct!

Do you believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt? ſo does Satan. Do you believe the election of God, the ſovereignty of grace, the perſeverance of the ſaint? it is poſſible the devil may have a more extenſive knowledge in theſe doctrines than the wiſeſt of men; yet this benefits him not; it is not want of knowledge, but want of love, that makes him what he is.

The only effect mentioned of the faith of devils is, that it increaſes their terror, and aggravates their guilt. They believe, (there are no ſceptics in hell), and tremble. Is not this too much the caſe of ſome of you? If you knew leſs, you would be eaſier at leaſt, and leſs inexcuſeable; and yet perhaps

* James, ii. 19.

haps you miſtake your ſtate, and think yourſelves on this account far leſs blameable than you really are. Perhaps ſometimes, when you reflect ſincerely on your ways, and how ſtrangely you are hurried to act contrary to the convictions which the preaching of the goſpel forces upon you, you are ready to charge the Lord and his diſpenſations hardly, and to ſay, O that he would give me his grace! but if not, what can I do without it? Let conſcience now ſpeak faithfully, and it will tell you, that if you are condemned, it will not be for what you cannot do, but for wilfully refuſing to improve the power already given you. When I tell you, that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord with comfort, and that you muſt break off from your vain company and evil practices, if you expect or deſire to be ſaved, you know that I ſpeak the truth; and your looks often teſtify that you feel the force of it. Now, while the word of God is ſounding in your ears, you perhaps are thinking, "It is time, high time indeed, to break "off; though the Lord has forborne me long, he "will ſurely ſtrike at laſt, if I go on thus." And yet, alas! what I have formerly ſeen gives me much cauſe to fear, that to-morrow, or the next time they entice you, you will conſent again. But could I tell you, that by going a different way you might gain a ſum of money, or could I make it appear, that the next time you went to ſuch a place your houſe would certainly be robbed, I make no doubt but you would forbear. And yet gold is not grace. It is then plain, that you have power, but your will is in fault. God has enlightened your conſcience; but you rebel againſt it. O repent! while there is yet ſpace afforded. Call upon the name of Jeſus; who knows but he may even yet deliver you!

2*dly*, He compares it to a dead carcaſe, which is not only unprofitable, but loathſome and offenſive.

May God shew you to-day, how odious your profession is in his sight! for by assenting to the truths of the gospel, and outwardly favouring the cause, and the instruments which the Lord has raised up to promote it, you are so far professors. May he enable you to be, not only almost, but altogether Christians! For while you thus halt between two opinions, and stand divided between God and the world, you are an abomination to God, a grief to his people, a stumbling-block to the ignorant, and are (if this was of any weight in comparison of what I have already said) secretly despised by those who pretend to court your acquaintance. Your guilt is in some respects more aggravated, and your example unspeakably more mischievous, than either would be if you openly rejected the truth. You stand in the rank of those wicked servants who know their master's will, but do it not. The great Judge has determined concerning these, that they shall be beaten with many stripes *. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; look up to Jesus, who is exalted to bestow both faith and repentance, that you may no longer be torn in pieces by those inward contentions, but experience that peace which passes all understanding †.

* Luke, xii. 48. † Phil. iv. 7.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

GUILT REMOVED, AND PEACE RESTORED.

PSALM li. 15.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

THE hiſtory of David is full of inſtruction. Every thing recorded of him affords us either conſolation or caution. In his example we ſee much of the ſovereign power and providence of God. When a youth, though the leaſt of his father's houſe, he was ſingled out, and called from following theep, to rule a kingdom. We ſee him ſupported through a variety of difficulties, and at length eſtabliſhed in his throne, to the amazement and confuſion of his enemies. In him likewiſe we have a ſtriking proof of the evil that is in the heart of man. Who would have thought it, that David, the man ſo highly favoured, ſo wonderfully preſerved, the man after God's own heart, who in the time of his diſtreſs could ſay, "My ſoul "thirſteth for God, even for the living God *," that he ſhould be in an unguarded hour ſeduced, ſurpriſed, and led captive of the devil! From gazing he proceeds to adultery, from adultery to murder, and at length ſinks into ſuch a ſtupid frame of mind, that an expreſs meſſage from God was needful to convince him of his ſin. And in this circumſtance we farther ſee the riches of divine grace and mercy, how tenderly the Lord watches over his theep, how carefully he brings them back

* Pſal. xlii. 2.

when wandering from him, and with what rich goodneſs he heals their backſlidings, and loves them freely. David was fallen, but not loſt. "The "thing which he had done diſpleaſed the Lord *." Yet his loving-kindneſs and faithfulneſs were unalterable. He was intereſted in that covenant, "which is well ordered in all things and ſure †;" and therefore, when he confeſſed his ſin, the Lord aſſured him, by his ſervant Nathan, that "he "had put away his ſin, and he ſhould not die for "it ‡."

However, though the Lord is thus gracious in paſſing by the iniquity of his children, yet he will let them know, by ſorrowful experience, that "it "is an evil and a bitter thing to ſin againſt him ||." Though he will not caſt off, he will chaſten; he will withdraw his preſence, and ſuſpend his gracious influences; and this to a ſenſible heart is a heavy puniſhment. Though David was delivered from the fear of death and hell, he penned this pſalm in the bitterneſs of his ſoul. He did not conſider the Lord as his enemy, but as a friend and a father, whom he had greatly offended. He longed to be reconciled; but could not as yet recover his former confidence. He hoped, indeed, that a time of refreſhment *would* come from his preſence; and therefore he continued waiting; but for the preſent he made heavy complaints, that his bones were broken, and his mouth ſtopped. He had loſt his ſtrength and life, and found he could not reſtore himſelf. He was ſtruck dumb by his late fall; and therefore he breathes out this prayer, "O Lord, "open thou my lips, and my mouth ſhall ſhew "forth thy praiſe."

From theſe words I propoſe to conſider that mournful

* 2 Sam. xi. 27. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.
‡ 2 Sam. xii. 13. || Jer. ii. 19.

mournful case, which too often happens in the Christian life, when the believer's mouth is stopped, and his lips closed, so that he cannot shew forth the praises of his God. And in this view,

1. I shall point out to you the persons who have reason to make this complaint.

2. Explain what is implied in their lips being thus shut up.

3. Shew you by what means the Lord opens the closed lips. And,

4. I shall observe, that when a person's lips are thus opened, his mouth, and all that is within him, will certainly shew forth the Lord's praise. May the Holy Spirit apply the word, and command a blessing upon the whole!

I. This petition especially suits two sorts of persons.

1. The *backsliding* believer; one who has formerly known the goodness of God: has rested in his love, and rejoiced in his salvation; "has tasted "that the Lord is gracious *," and walketh with comfort in the way of his commandments; but at length, by an unguarded conduct, or by building wood, hay, and stubble, upon the Lord's foundation †, has grieved the good Spirit of God, and he is withdrawn. The Comforter ‡ and instructor of his soul is far from him; and therefore he sits in darkness and silence. He only retains a sense of his loss, and can do no more than sigh out this prayer: "O Lord, open thou my lips."

2. The *doubting* believer. The unbelieving believer, if I may be allowed the expression, I mean one who has been deeply convinced of sin, and taught by the Spirit of God, that there is no salvation but in the Lord Jesus Christ. One who loves

* 1 Pet. ii. 3. † 1 Cor. iii. 11—13. ‡ Lam. i. 16.

loves the word, and ways, and people of God, who is careful to the utmoſt of his power to abſtain from the evil that is in the world, and eſteems "the loving-kindneſs of the Lord to be better than "life*." One at whom the enemy has often thruſt ſore that he might fall †, but the Lord has ſecretly upheld him through many a bitter hour, and he finds he is not cut off yet, though he perhaps expects it every day. Such as theſe have indeed ſufficient ground to ſay, "If the Lord "was not on my ſide, I had been ſwallowed up "long ago ‡." They have reaſon to conclude with David, "By this, if by nothing elſe, I know "that thou favoureſt me, ſeeing my enemies, who "have aſſaulted me ſo continually, have not yet "prevailed againſt me §." But yet, through a ſenſe of paſt guilt, a ſight of preſent corruptions, the prevalence of unbelief, the workings of a legal ſpirit, the want of a clear apprehenſion of the Lord's way of juſtifying the ungodly, and from the force of Satan's temptations, who is exceeding buſy to preſs all theſe things upon the heart, their mouths are ſtopped likewiſe. They cannot believe, and therefore they cannot ſpeak. However, there are ſeaſons and intervals when they obtain a little glimpſe of hope, and then the whole deſire of their ſouls is expreſſed in the words of my text, "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth ſhall "ſhew forth thy praiſe."

II. I proceed to conſider what may be included in this caſe, what it is to have the mouth ſtopped. The perſons I have mentioned have the ſame liberty of ſpeech in common affairs as others; but becauſe they cannot converſe freely with him, who, notwithſtanding

* Pſ. lxiii. 3. † Pſ. cxviii. 13.
‡ Pſ. cxxiv. 3. § Pſ. xli. 11.

notwithstanding all their doubts and fears, and follies, still maintains a secret hold of their souls, they account themselves no better than dumb. They cannot speak *to* the Lord, nor *of* him, nor *for* him, as they with and ought to do. These are the three heads of their complaint, and therefore they sigh, and say, "O Lord, open thou my "lips."

1. Alas! says the believer that has sinned, and lost his strength, "O that it was with me as in "times past*!" I well remember when I had freedom of access, and found it good to draw near to my God; when I could pour out all my complaints and cares before him, and leave them with him. I remember the time when my heart was overwhelmed within me, and my spirit was burdened†. I saw myself a wretched, helpless sinner. Innumerable evils took hold of me. I thought I was marked out for destruction. I found Satan at my right hand, waiting for a permission to seize my soul, and make me his prey for ever‡." I looked round, but saw no way to escape, and gave up all for lost. But, O! I remember, when none in heaven, or earth, could help me, how the Lord drew "near to me in the day of my "distress§, and said unto my soul, Fear not, I "am thy salvation." He revealed himself as an almighty suitable Saviour. He said, "Deliver "him from going down to the pit, I have found "a ransom‖: He brought me out of the hor- "rible pit and miry clay, and set my feet upon "a rock¶. He brought me into his banqueting- "house, and his banner over me was Love. I "sat down under his shadow with great delight,

"and

* Job, xxix. 2. † Ps. cxlii. 3. ‡ Zech. iii. 1.
§ Lam. iii. 57. ‖ Job, xxxiii. 24. ¶ Ps. xl. 2.

" and his fruit was ſweet unto my taſte *." This was the beginning; but it was not all. Many a gracious viſit he favoured me with afterwards. O the ſweet hours of ſecret prayer! O the happy communion in which I walked with him all the day long! " Then in the multitude of thoughts " within me, his comforts refreſhed my ſoul †." Then I could ſmile at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world. Every bleſſing of common providence was doubly welcome, for I could read his name of love written upon it: and every affliction brought reſignation and peace, becauſe I ſaw my Father's hand in it, and found at a throne of grace renewed ſtrength always ſuited to my need. Happy were thoſe times: But alas! they are gone.—I could hardly then perſuade myſelf that I ſhould be moved any more. I little thought there was ſuch deſperate wickedneſs in my heart, that after ſo much experience of his goodneſs, I ſhould fooliſhly wander from him again. But, O! what a change have I lived to ſee! I have grieved that good Spirit of God by which I was ſealed, and now I find myſelf in the hands of my enemies. The Lord hides himſelf, and ſtands afar off, and I have loſt the power of prayer. Thoſe precious promiſes which once were the joy of my ſoul, which I could boldly plead at the throne of grace, and ſay, all theſe are mine, have no longer any power or ſweetneſs; I read them, but I cannot feel them; and my trials and ſins, which once I could caſt upon my Saviour, and find inſtant relief, are now a heavy burden, too great for me to bear. Mercies have loſt their reliſh, and afflictions have loſt their uſefulneſs; ſince neither the one nor the other are of force to ſtir up my ſoul to prayer, " O Lord, open thou my lips."

* Cant. ii. 3. 4. † Pſ. xciv. 19.

I remember likewiſe, when I had this freedom in ſpeaking *with* God, how pleaſing it was to me to ſpeak *of* him. My heart was full, and running over with a ſenſe of his goodneſs, ſo that it was my meat and drink to ſay, "Come unto me, all you "that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath "done for my ſoul *." Then the company of his people was delightful indeed. The meaneſt of his children that would ſit and hear me ſpeak of his loving-kindneſs, was precious to me: I eſteemed them the excellent of the earth †, in whom was all my delight. We took ſweet counſel together, and walked to the houſe of God in company. And I thank God I love them ſtill; but I can neither help them, nor be helped by them, as in times paſt. In vain they ſay unto me, "Come, ſing us one of "the ſongs of Zion. Alas! how can I ſing the "ſongs of the Lord in a ſtrange land? My harp "is hung upon the willows, my tongue cleaveth to "the roof of my mouth ‡." I dwell in darkneſs and ſilence, as thoſe who have been long dead. "O Lord, open thou my lips."

And when I could thus ſpeak *to* God, and of him, I had likewiſe liberty to ſpeak *for* him. "I "was then very jealous for the Lord of hoſts ||." It wounded my ſoul to hear his name profaned, to ſee his commandments broken, and his goſpel ſlighted. I had a tender concern for poor ſinners; I could not but wiſh, that, if poſſible, every perſon I met might know what I knew, and feel what I felt. And eſpecially where I had friendſhip and influence, I was ready to improve it to the beſt purpoſe. "The love of Chriſt conſtrained me to "lay myſelf out for his ſervice §." I could not but

* Pſ. lxvi. 16. † Pſ. xvi. 3. and lv. 14.
‡ Pſ. cxxxvii. 3.—5. || 1 Kings, xix. 10.
§ 2 Cor. v. 14.

but oppose sin and self-righteousness, and plead the cause of my Saviour upon every occasion. "I was "not * ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for I felt "it the power of God unto salvation in my own "soul," and durst recommend it to every one, as the only balm for sin and sorrow. But now "the "crown is fallen from my head; wo unto me that "I have sinned †." I am shut out from the fountain, and all my streams are dried up. My comforts and my usefulness are declined together. "O "Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall "shew forth thy praise."

Such is the complaint of the backslider in heart, when he is filled with his own ways.

And, 2. This, with a little variation, will suit the doubting tempted soul too. These will confess, that the experience I have described is the desire of their hearts. Such communication with God, such a freedom in his ways, such a zeal for his service, is the very thing they mean, when they intreat the Lord to open their lips. And indeed they cannot, they dare not deny, but they have at times had some little tastes of them, otherwise they would not know what I mean. For these things are to the natural man the merest folly imaginable; he understands them not, therefore he despises them; nay, he hates them with a perfect hatred, and opposes them with all his heart. But still they complain under a present burden. One dark hour of temptation blots out all the traces of comfort they have known, and they refuse consolation. They will insist on it, I have neither part nor lot in the matter, I cannot get near him, and I fear I never shall. When I attempt to pray, a sense of my sins and sinfulness stops my mouth. I see the Lord, not upon the golden mercy-seat, but upon

* Rom. i. 16. † Lam. v. 16.

upon the fiery throne of juſtice, and I am ready to call upon the rocks and mountains to hide me from his preſence. When I would commune with his people, I am ſilenced by that dreadful word, "What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or "to take my covenant into thy mouth *?" When I would bear my feeble teſtimony for him in the world, conſcience alarms me, and ſays, "Thou "that teacheſt others, teacheſt thou not thyſelf †?" And then "the enemy comes in like a flood ‡,' with, "God has forſaken him; perſecute and take "him, for there is none to deliver him ‖." Thus "I ſpend my days in groaning, and water my "couch with tears §."

This is a heavy caſe indeed; and would be inſupportable, but that the faithful Shepherd, in a ſecret unſeen way, affords timely ſuccour, and ſets bounds to the raging enemy, beyond which he cannot paſs. "Hitherto ſhalt thou come ¶;" thus far thou art permitted to vex, and wound, and tear, but no farther. The Lord knows our frame, and has promiſed with "every temptation to provide "either ſtrength to endure, or a way to eſcape **." Two things are proper to be mentioned for the encouragement of ſuch ſouls, to wait on, and expect deliverance.

The firſt is, The examples of the ſaints. Think not your lot ſtrange, as though ſome new and unheard-of thing had befallen you. Thouſands, and ten thouſands, now in glory, have taſted, yea drank deeply of this cup before you. And many yet upon earth, who are now rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, have ſaid in times paſt, as you ſay now, "I ſhall one day periſh by the hand "of

* Pſ. l. 16. † Rom. ii. 21. ‡ Iſ. lix. 19.
‖ Pſ. lxxi. 11. § Pſ. vi. 6. ¶ Job, xxxviii. 11.
** 1 Cor. x. 13.

" of theſe enemies; the Lord hath caſt me quite " off, and I ſhall never live to ſee his goodneſs in " the land of the living *." Or if you chuſe ſcripture-proofs, you need only read the book of Job, the Pſalms, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, to be convinced that ſome whom you number amongſt the Lord's moſt eminent and highly-favoured ſervants have been reduced to uſe ſuch expreſſions as ſuit your caſe, no leſs than if they had been wrote for you alone. Do not they ſay, " That they were broken with breach upon breach; that the arrows of God ſtuck faſt in them; that the Lord wrote bitter things againſt them, and counted them his enemies; that he had ſhut them up within ſtone walls, and covered himſelf with a cloud, that their prayers might not paſs through †!" Theſe are but a ſmall part of their complaints; and what can you ſay more than this?

Again, Conſider the precious promiſes of the word. Are they not expreſsly directed to you? Do you account yourſelf a backſlider? " Return unto " me, ye backſliding children, and I will receive " you, ſaith the Lord ‡." Do you think yourſelf a ſinner of uncommon ſize? yet, ſaith the Lord, " Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be " white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, " they ſhall be as wool ‖." Do you ſay your neck is as an iron ſinew, and your brow braſs? yet hear the word of the Lord, " Hearken unto me, " ye ſtout-hearted, that are far from righteouſ- " neſs. I bring near my righteouſneſs; it ſhall " not be far off §." Is there ſomething peculiarly dreadful in your caſe, ſomething that you could hardly be prevailed on to intruſt to your deareſt friend?

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.; Pſ. lxxiv. 1.

† Job. xvi. 14.; Pſ. xxxviii. 2.; Job, xiii. 26. & xxxii. 10. Lam. iii. 9. 44

‡ Jer. iii. 14. 22. ‖ Iſ. i. 18. § Iſ. xlvi. 12. 13.

friend? yet be not afraid; for Truth has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be for-"given unto men. Let the wicked forsake his "way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; "and let him return unto the Lord, and he will "have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he "will abundantly pardon *." But still, when we have said all, we are but miserable comforters. Even with the word of God in our mouths, we speak too often in vain. It is the Lord alone that can open the lips. And, O! that this may be the happy opportunity of his gracious appearance in favour of all here present, that our wounds may be healed, and our tongues unloosed to proclaim his praise! Lift up your hearts to him, while I endeavour to shew you, by what means, or in what manner, the Lord is pleased to open the lips that have been long closed. This is the third particular I proposed to consider from my text.

III. I say then, that when the Lord is about to open the lips, he proceeds by the following steps.

1. "He opens the eyes." We are often in a similar case with Hagar in the wilderness. The water was spent in the bottle, and she sat down in despair. There was a well or fountain close to her, sufficient to have supplied her with water to her life's end; but she saw it not till God opened her eyes †. Just so, many a poor soul is distressed, and says, My stock is spent; I had but little grace at the best, and, alas! that little is gone. And now, if the Lord should ask some *hard* thing, would you not do it to obtain a supply? You would willingly take a long journey, or part with all your wealth, to have grace abounding in your hearts; but you know you cannot expect help in this way. It

* Matth. xii. 31.; Is. lv. 7. † Gen. xxi. 15.—19.

It is true, all contrivances of our own will have no effect; but, bleſſed be God, they are as needleſs as they would be uſeleſs. We need not dig in the earth, nor climb the ſkies, nor croſs the ſeas; our remedy is *near* *. We need no coſtly offerings of ſilver or gold; our remedy is *cheap*. Come, pore no longer upon your empty bottle, but look to the fountain, the river, the ocean of all grace. May the Lord open your eyes, (as he did the eyes of Eliſha's ſervant †), and I will undertake to point you to an object that ſhall anſwer all your wants. Look unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; look unto him as he hung naked, wounded, bleeding, dead, and forſaken upon the croſs. Look unto him again as he *now* reigns in glory, poſſeſſed of all power in heaven and in earth, with thouſands of thouſands of ſaints and angels worſhipping before him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand miniſtering unto him; and then compare your ſins with his blood, your wants with his fulneſs, your unbelief with his faithfulneſs, your weakneſs with his ſtrength, your inconſtancy with his everlaſting love. If the Lord opens the eyes of your underſtanding, you would be aſtoniſhed at the compariſon. Would you compare a ſmall grain of ſand upon the ſhore with the maſſy mountains which hide their heads in the clouds, and ſpread their roots from ſea to ſea? or the ſpark of a glow-worm with the noon-day's ſun? yet there is leſs diſproportion between theſe, than between the utmoſt capacity of your deſires and wants, and the immenſe reſources provided for you, in the righteouſneſs, compaſſion, and power of our dear Redeemer. "He is able to ſave to the ut-"termoſt ‡;" and all our trouble ariſes chiefly from this, that our eyes are holden, ſo that we do

* Rom. x 6.—8. † 2 Kings, vi 17. ‡ Heb. vii. 25.

do not know him*. Therefore the firſt ſtep towards opening the lips is to open our eyes, that we may ſee him, and look upon him by ſuch a ſight as unlooſed the tongue of unbelieving Thomas, and conſtrained him to cry out, "My Lord and my "God†!"

2. When the eyes are thus opened, the Lord, in the next place, and by that as a means, "opens "the ear." When Chriſt is out of ſight, we are deaf to all the calls, invitations, and promiſes of the ſcripture. But a believing view of him who died that we might live, rouſes the attention, and makes us willing and able to hear what the Lord will ſpeak‡ to his people. And what does he ſay from the croſs? "Look upon me, and be ye "ſaved. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to "me. Behold my hands, my feet, my pierced "ſide; all this I bore for you. Be not afraid, "only believe. O thou of little faith, wherefore "doſt thou doubt? See, ſinner, how I have lo"ved thee, I have trodden the wine-preſs alone. "I have deſtroyed death, and him that had the "power of death. There is henceforth no con"demnation to them that believe in me‖." And what does he ſay from his kingdom? "I have "prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. For a "ſeaſon you have ſorrow; but I will ſee you "again, and your heart ſhall rejoice. Him that "cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out. I am "the firſt and the laſt;—that was dead and am "alive. I keep the keys of death and hell, and "ſave whom I will. Caſt thy burden upon me, I "will ſuſtain thee. I will take away thy iniquity. "Be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee.

"Go

* Luke, xxiv. 16. † John, xx. 28. ‡ Pſ. lxxxv. 8.
‖ Iſa. xiv. 22.; John, xii. 32.; John, xx. 27.; Mark, v. 36.; Matth. xiv. 31.; Iſ. lxiii. 3.; Heb. ii. 14.; Rom. viii. 1.

" Go in peace, and sin no more *." *My sacrifice, my God,* what words are these!

By opening the eye to see his excellence and power, and the ear to hear his gracious words, he, in the next place, " opens the heart." He breaks the prison-doors, forces for himself an entrance, and sets the prisoner at liberty. He touches the rock, and the waters flow †. Now a true and filial repentance takes place; now sin appears exceedingly sinful indeed. There was a sorrow before, but it was fruitless and ineffectual; but the sight of him who was pierced for our sins, and the welcome sound of *pardon* proclaimed in the conscience, produce a sorrow after a godly sort, a repentance never to be repented of. Thus it was with the woman who washed our Lord's feet ‡; she had been a great sinner, much was forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. Thus it was with Peter: he had been a grievous backslider; he had been with Jesus upon the mount, and saw the excellent glory; he was stout in his protestation, " Though all " men deny thee, yet will not I:" but he shrunk at the voice of a girl, and said, " I know not the " man." When the servants spoke to him, he cursed and swore; but when Jesus looked upon him, he wept ‖. Do you think our Lord looked upon him with disdain and indignation? rather with a look of love; a look that at once convinced him of his sin, and gave him to understand that the Lord pitied and forgave him. This look broke his heart in pieces. He went out and wept bitterly. And afterwards, though greatly humbled as to confidence in himself, yet when asked the question, he could boldly appeal to the Searcher of hearts, " Lord,

* Luke, xxii. 32.; John, vi. 22.; John, vi. 37.; Rev. i. 17. 18.; Is. lv. 22. Micah, vii. 19.; Mat. ix. 2.; John, viii. 11.
† Ps. lxxviii. 20. ‡ Luke, vii. 38. 47.
‖ Luke, xxii. 61. 62.

" Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that " I love thee *."

And when the eyes, the ears, the heart, are thus opened; when the underſtanding is enlightened, the will engaged, and the affections inflamed, the cure is wrought. Then the lips will open of courſe, and the mouth be filled with thankſgiving and praiſe. O that it would pleaſe the Lord to give to me, and to each of you, a clearer knowledge of this bleſſed change from heart-felt experience, than is in the power of words (of my poor words eſpecially) to deſcribe! " Come, (my friends), let us " return unto the Lord: for he hath wounded, " and he will heal us; he hath ſmitten, and he " will bind us up †." Verily we are all guilty in this matter; we have all provoked him by unbelief, and wandering from his good way; and therefore we live ſo far below our privileges, and are ſo often heavy and ſorrowful, when we have in him grounds of continual joy. Now, let us unite in this prayer, " O Lord, open thou our lips, diſplay thy power in the midſt of us, heal all our breaches, rend the vail of our unbelief, blot out the thick clouds of our ſins, cleanſe us from all our iniquities and idols, and teach our ſtammering tongues, and barren hearts, to ſhew forth the praiſe of thy abundant goodneſs."

I proceed to obſerve, in the laſt place,

IV. THAT if the Lord is pleaſed to anſwer our deſire, and to open your lips in this manner, then you will ſurely praiſe him. You will praiſe him with your mouths, and in your lives; you will thankfully acknowledge his mercy, his power, and his wiſdom.

1. You will praiſe his mercy. Is the cooling

* John, xxi. 17. † Hoſea, vi. 1.

ſtream welcome to the thirſty ſoul? is a reprieve acceptable to a poor condemned malefactor? Still more welcome is a ſenſe of pardoning love to a ſoul that has felt the evil and effects of ſin. What! to be taken from the dunghill *, and made a companion with princes! to have all our guilt and complaints removed at once! to be ſnatched as it were from the brink of hell, and placed in the very ſuburbs of heaven! to be able to ſay, "O Lord, "thou waſt [juſtly] angry with me, [and I went "mourning under a ſenſe of thy diſpleaſure]; but "[now] thine anger is turned away, and thou com-"fortedſt me †!" is not this a mercy? eſpecially conſidering how undeſerving we are of the ſmalleſt favour! And farther, the way in which it was conveyed! that the pardon, though free to us, is a pardon "bought with blood:" that it coſt the Lord Jeſus his life, his ſoul, to effect that bleſſed reconciliation in which we are beginning to rejoice! ſtill more, that all we can now receive of his love is but a taſte, a ſmall thing, in compariſon of what he has reſerved for us! O what mercy is here! O what thanks does it call for! "O Lord, open thou "our lips, and our mouth ſhall ſhew forth thy "praiſe."

2. You will praiſe his power. I thought, ſays the poor ſoul at ſuch a time, I was fallen ſo low that there was no help. The more I toiled and laboured in my own ſtrength, the farther the bleſſing ſeemed from me. I know from experience, that none but an almighty arm could relieve me. Creatures, means, and contrivances, I had tried, and tried again, but found them all phyſicians of no value. But now, "the right hand of the Lord has done "wondrouſly, the right hand of the Lord has "brought mighty things to paſs ‡." What ſhall I ſay? "He hath both ſpoken himſelf, and alſo hath "done

* 1 Sam. ii. 8. † Iſ. xii. 1. ‡ Pſ. cxviii. 15, 16; Iſ. xxxviii. 15.

"done it." The work is his; to him be all the glory. I got not this victory by my own bow *, neither did my own arm save me; "but the Lord himself has been pleased to shew the exceeding greatness † of his mighty power in my behalf." Therefore, "not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the "glory and the praise ‡."

3. You will praise his wisdom. "What I do, "(said our Lord to Peter), thou knowest not now, "but thou shalt know hereafter ‖." The mourning soul often asks the question with David, "I "will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou for-"saken me? why go I mourning because of the "enemy §?" When the Lord turns your mourning into joy, you shall know why. You will then see that there was a need ¶ of all these things. It is to shew you what is in your hearts, to mortify the spirit of self-righteousness, "to teach you, that without him you can do nothing **," to make you wise and experienced against Satan's devices; to give you a tender sympathy and fellow-feeling in the sufferings and infirmities of your brethren, and to enable you to encourage and comfort others ††, who shall be hereafter in your case, by relating what you have seen and known yourself in your various conflicts and strivings against sin. These are some of the reasons why the Lord suffers his dear children to groan being burdened, and sometimes permits their enemies to gain a short advantage over them, that he may humble and prove them ‡‡, in order to do them good in their latter end. And, O! with what wisdom is all this appointed! A little of it we may see at present, but we shall not have a

* Ps. xliv. 6. † Eph. i. 19. ‡ Ps. cxv. 1.
‖ John, xiii. 7. § Ps. xlii. 9. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 6.
** John, xv. 5. †† 2 Cor. i. 4. ‡‡ Deut. viii. 2,—16.

complete view till we get safe home. Then to look back upon the way by which he led us through this wilderness, will furnish matter for eternal praise.

Farther, not only your mouths, but your lives shall praise him. What is the language of a believing heart, when the Lord pardons his sins, and binds up his wounds? It is this, "Now, Lord, I "am thine, thy vows are upon me, for thou hast "redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Shall I "continue in sin because grace has abounded? "God forbid! I am crucified with Christ, cru-"cified to the world, and the world to me. The "love of Christ constrains me. The time past is "sufficient to have lived in vanity; henceforth I "am the Lord's. Has he bound me by his tender "mercies, to present myself, body and soul, to his "service. Here, O Lord, I offer my whole self, "all that I am, and all that I have, a living sacri-"fice, holy and acceptable to thee. O let me ne-"ver, never, wander from thee again, but walk in "the light, as thou art in the light, and have com-"munion with thee here below, till thou shalt re-"move me out of the reach of sin and sorrow for "ever *."

If there are any here who have neither known the loving kindness of the Lord, nor mourned under the sense of his displeasure, I am sure your lips are closed to this hour. And should you die thus incapable of praising the God who made you, and the grace which has brought the sound of the gospel to your ears, it were better for you that you had never been born †. You have much reason to cry,

* Ps. cxvi. 14. 16. and xxxi. 5. Rom. vi. 1.; Gal. ii. 20. and vi. 14.; 2 Cor. v. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 3.; Rom. xii. 1.; 1 John, i. 7. † Matth. xxvi. 24.

cry out, "O Lord, open thou my lips." Open my eyes to see my danger, to see the evil of my nature and life. Open my lips to confess my wickedness. Open my heart to receive thy word, that I likewise may bear a part in the praises thy people pay thee, and not perish (as without thy mercy I must do) with a lie in my right hand *. Consider, the time is short †; death is *near*, and may be *sudden*. May the Lord enable you to consider the things belonging to your peace ‡, before they are hid from your eyes!

And you, my friends, who at present enjoy the light of God's countenance, who know your sins are forgiven || for his name's sake, and have a happy freedom of access at a throne of grace, O be mindful of your privileges; beware of sin, beware of self, beware of Satan. Your enemy envies you your liberty; he watches you with subtilty and malice; he spreads snares for your feet; he desires to have advantage of you, "that he may sift you as "wheat §." Therefore be upon your guard, be humble, make much of secret prayer, keep close to the scriptures of God; by the words of his lips you shall be preserved from the paths of the destroyer ¶. Attend diligently upon the ordinances, and speak often one ** to another, in love and faithfulness, of what the Lord has done and prepared for you, and of what †† manner of persons you ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness. Thus you shall be kept safe from evil. Jesus has prayed for you that your faith may not fail ‡‡. Fix your eye ||| and your heart upon him, as he that must do all *for* you, all *in* you, all *by* you. And he has said, "Yet

* Is. xliv. 20. † 1 Cor. vii. 29. ‡ Luke, xix. 42.
|| 1 John, ii. 12. § Luke, xxii. 31. ¶ Ps. xvii. 4.
** Mal. iii. 16. †† 2 Pet. iii. 11. ‡‡ Luke, xxii. 32.
||| Heb. xii. 2.

" Yet a little while, and behold I come quickly *." Hold faſt that which thou haſt. " Be thou faithful " unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. " Amen. Even ſo, come, Lord Jeſus †."

* Rev. iii. 11. † Rev. ii. 10. and xxii. 20.

SER-

SERMON XX.

OF THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

1 JOHN, v. 19.

And we know that we are of God.

A Well-grounded and abiding perſuaſion, not only that the doctrines of the goſpel are true in themſelves, but that we through grace are ſurely and unchangeably intereſted in them, is highly deſirable. If we may be ſafe, we cannot be happy and comfortable without it, when once we have received an experimental knowledge of the deceitfulneſs of our own hearts, and the variety, ſubtilty, and force of Satan's temptations: And he who knows our frame and ſituation, has in his holy word made a full proviſion for us in this reſpect, and declared it to be his intention, that thoſe who flee for refuge to the hope he has ſet before them, might have ſtrong conſolation *; not be left at an uncertainty in a concern of the higheſt importance, but be rooted, grounded, eſtabliſhed, and ſettled in the knowledge of his love, and be enabled to maintain it as an unſhaken principle through every change of diſpenſation and frame, "that he who hath be-"gun a good work in them will perform it until the "day of Jeſus Chriſt †."

This animating confidence, ſo well ſuited, and ſo neceſſary to render the ſoul ſuperior to all the trials of life, to inſpire a noble diſdain of the ſinful pleaſures and vain purſuits of the preſent evil world, and to engage the grateful exertion of every

* Heb. vi. 18. † Phil. i. 6.

ry faculty and power in the service of God, is generally expressed by the word *Assurance*. But though the word is in frequent use, the thing itself has been, and still is a subject of much dispute and controversy amongst professors of the gospel. Many not being conscious of such a cheering persuasion in themselves, and too hasty in supposing their attainments must be a standard to others, have ventured to deny the possibility of such an assurance, and treated every claim to it as visionary and enthusiastic. On the other hand, some have maintained the opposite extreme, and held assurance so essential to faith, that without it no person has a scriptural warrant even to hope that a work of grace is begun in his heart. This sentiment, especially when asserted by persons of undoubted character for gifts, graces, and usefulness, has greatly startled and discouraged weak and feeble-minded souls, and been too often an occasion of adding to the distress of those who rather ought to have been comforted.

Great differences of judgement have likewise obtained concerning the means whereby, the manner in which, and the persons to whom, this assurance is communicated, supposing it attainable. It is not needful to insist on particulars. Perhaps the best way to prevent, or remove mistakes, is to propose the truth simply; which, so far as it takes place, will necessarily prevent the entertainment of error. I only mention in general, that there is a variety of sentiments on this point, and the most of them supported by respectable names, in order to caution you against paying too great a deference to human authority, and to urge you to praise God for your Bibles, and to be diligent in the perusal of them. If you search the scriptures, and pray for the Spirit, you may arrive to a clear satisfaction for yourselves,

yourselves, no less than if all the learned were of one mind, and all of your side.

My text assures us, that this assurance was possessed in the first ages of the church. There were some who could say without hesitation, "We "know that we are of God;" and though they are an apostle's word, he uses them not exclusively as an apostle, but generally as a believer. The greatest part of the chapter, and indeed of the epistle, shews that he considers those to whom he was writing, as partakers with in the common privileges of Christians. So likewise St Paul joins the believing Corinthians with himself, when he says, "We know, that if our earthly house of this "tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of "God, an house not made with hands, eternal in "the heavens*." And elsewhere he takes it for granted, that they (some of them at least) had this assurance, and presses them to a lively discharge of duty upon that consideration: "for as much as "ye know that your labour is not in vain in the "Lord †."

And we need make no scruple of affirming from the fullest evidence, that this precious privilege was not confined or designed by God to be so, to the first ages of the gospel. There have been in all periods of the church, where the word and ordinances of Christ have been faithfully administered, many who could say, "We know that we are of "God;" and we trust there are more than a few who can say so, and give a solid scriptural evidence of the hope that is in them, even in this degenerate day. But because arguments from facts, which must depend upon persons testimony in their own cases, are not allowed to be fully conclusive; and

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † 1 Cor. xv. 58.

because the greater part of those whom we hope sincerely love the Lord Jesus, live far below their just right and privilege, and are perplexed with doubts and fears, which dishonour their profession, weaken their hands, and make their lives uncomfortable; I shall endeavour at this time to state and explain the nature of assurance, to prove that it is attainable, to point out the means by which we are to expect it, and to take notice of the hindrances which keep so many who are interested in the gospel-salvation from enjoying their privilege, and make them unwilling or afraid to say, "We know that "we are of God." What I have to offer on these particulars, will occur under one or other of the following propositions.

I. ASSURANCE is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith, but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard-seed *. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind, and produces (according to its degree) the same uniform effects. It purifies the heart from the love and practice of sin; it works by love to the Lord Jesus Christ, his ordinances, ways, and people †; and it enables the possessor to overcome the world, to stand fast against its frowns, and to resist the more pleasing, but not less dangerous, influence of its smiles. Each of these effects is beyond the power, and contrary to the inclination, of the natural man. "No "man can say, that Jesus Christ is the Lord ‡," that is, can give him the honour due to his name, renounce

* Rom. xiv. 1.; Matth. iv. 31. and xvii. 20.
† Acts, xv. 9.; Gal. v. 6.; 1 John, v. 4.
‡ 1 Cor. xii. 3.; Phil. iii. 8.

renounce every other hope of salvation, "and "count all things but loss and dung that he may "win Christ, but by the Holy Ghost." Yet thus far many have undoubtedly attained, who have not assurance; but while they give sufficient evidence by their conduct, that they have received precious faith in their hearts, they go mourning all the day long, and almost pass sentence against themselves as unbelievers. Now, what these mourners want, in order to their establishment and assurance, is not some new principle which they have not yet received, but only a stronger degree of that faith which they already possess. Some good writers speak of faith of reliance, faith of adherence, faith of assurance, direct and reflex acts of faith, &c.; but these are not scriptural modes of expression, nor do they appear to me to throw light upon the subject, but rather to increase the perplexity of plain people, who are apt to imagine these are so many different kinds of faith. The scripture mentions only two kinds, "a living and "a dead faith *." The true faith is faint and weak in its beginnings, like the life of a new-born infant; but it is growing up to maturity, and shall increase with the increase of God, "unto a per-"fect man, unto the measure of the stature of "the fulness of Christ †." From thence it follows,

II. The grounds and principles of faith and assurance are exactly the same. The first and lowest act of saving faith necessarily includes three things.

1. An apprehension of the sufficiency and authority of Christ to save. Men that live in their sins will rest upon a slender hope! but a conscience

* James, ii. 17. † Eph. iv. 13.

truly awakened must have sure grounds to go upon, and, without the discovery of such a Saviour as is revealed in the gospel, would sink into despair. It is afraid of being deceived, and is so far enlightened that it cannot be easily imposed upon: a sense of the sinfulness of sin, an impression of the majesty of God, will not suffer it to rest in any thing short of a perfect atonement and a perfect righteousness. But when the eyes of the mind are opened, and Jesus is seen as revealed by the word and Spirit of God, all scruples of this sort are silenced, and the soul perceives and feels, that he is fully equal to the mighty undertaking.

2. An application to him. This of course follows a persuasion of his ability to save; for who will sit down and perish, when there is a possibility of relief? There is, perhaps, a great questioning of Christ's willingness; but still, since there is a peradventure, a sense of distress on the one hand, and a view of his power and grace on the other, will extort a cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish *."

3. From hence there arises a hope in his mercy, which is fainter or stronger according as the knowledge of Jesus is more or less distinct, and the surrender unto him more or less simple and unreserved; and therefore, in general, it is very faint at first; for the knowledge of Christ in a measure depends upon our knowledge of the scriptures, which testify of him, and on the proofs we have had of this wisdom, grace, and love to ourselves: but the young convert, in whom the seed of faith is but lately sown, has but little acquaintance with the word; for he has but just begun to know the value of it; and he has but little experience;

* Matth. viii. 25. and xiv. 30.

rience; though his eyes are opened, his sight is not yet confirmed, nor his spiritual senses exercised.

Farther, though he is sincerely convinced of his need of a Saviour, there is still much of a legal bias, and a principle of self-righteousness in his heart, which, so far from being removed, is not yet discovered to himself; and while he thinks he looks to Christ alone, he is looking in himself for qualifications to recommend him, and afraid to draw near with confidence, because he cannot find them. These things discourage his hopes, and demonstrate his faith to be but weak.

But the strongest and most lively assurance that we can conceive attainable in the present life, is wrought and maintained by the very same principles, which have so faint an influence in the infancy of faith. Let us hear the great champion St Paul, in the close of an exemplary laborious life, giving an account to a dear and intimate friend of the hope that is in him. He had been honoured and distinguished for grace, gifts, and usefulness, in a peculiar manner; he had laboured more abundantly than all the apostles; he had fully preached the gospel, and gathered churches throughout a very large part of the Roman empire *; his first call was extraordinary, by the Lord's appearing to him in glory; and some of his succeeding experiences had been no less singular, for he had been caught up into the third heavens †; finally, his suffering for the gospel had been as great and remarkable as his services. But when he expresses his assurance of support and salvation, he says not a syllable of these things, but rests the whole upon such points as are common to him with all believers: "I know whom I have believed, and I am "persuaded,

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.; Rom. xv. 19. † 2 Cor. xii. 2.

" perſuaded, that he is able to keep that which I " have committed unto him againſt that day *." We ſee there St Paul's aſſurance was founded on, 1*ſt*, A knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, the object of his faith; 2*dly*, A conſciouſneſs of tranſactions which had paſſed between him and his Saviour; he had committed ſomething to him, that was, his ſoul, with all its intereſts; 3*dly*, A perſuaſion of his ability, willingneſs, and faithfulneſs, to ſecure and preſerve what he had taken charge of. And theſe are the very ſame principles which are neceſſary to the firſt act of weak faith, only here they exert themſelves with their proper power and efficacy. From hence,

III. ASSURANCE is equally open to all believers. It is not the excluſive privilege of great ſervices or ſufferings; it is not confined to miniſters, martyrs, or apoſtles; but is a prize ſet before all who love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, being no other than the growth and eſtabliſhment of that faith which they have already received. The reaſons why all who believe are not happy in this aſſurance of hope, are to be ſought, not in the will of God, who hath made abundant proviſion for our comfort, but in the perverſeneſs, ignorance, and miſapprehenſions of our own hearts, and from inattention to his revealed word. We are not ſtraitened in him, but in ourſelves. It is not eaſy to enumerate the many ways in which our depravity works to keep this good thing from us. A few of the principal are theſe.

1. Inſincerity. Where grace is really implanted by the Holy Spirit, it will ſurely prevail at length, and ſubdue the whole ſoul to the obedience of faith. But in too many there is for a long time, not

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

not only a great oppoſition from indwelling corruption, but a ſecret cleaving of the will to evil. A double-mindedneſs *, a kind of halting between two opinions, ſo that while the deſire and prayer of the ſoul ſeems expreſſed againſt all ſin univerſally, there is ſtill an allowed reſerve of ſomething inconſiſtent with light received. An habitual indulgence of known or ſuſpected evil, or an habitual neglect of any known duty, will certainly prevent the growth of grace and conſolation. For the Lord claims (what is his juſt due) the whole heart, and will not afford the ſtrengthening light of his countenance, while any idol is deliberately ſet up in his preſence. "Then," ſays David, (and not till then), "ſhall I not be aſhamed, when "I have reſpect unto all thy commandments." And our Lord Jeſus, when aſked, "How wilt thou "manifeſt thyſelf unto us?" anſwered, "If a man "love me, he will keep my words, and my Father "will love him, and we will come unto him, and "make our abode with him †." Till the pride and naughtineſs of our ſpirits are conquered, and we are made willing to give up all, to renounce whatever is contrary to his precepts, though pleaſing as a right eye, and ſeemingly neceſſary as the right hand, it is in vain to expect a full and abiding aſſurance of his love.

2. Indolence. With reſpect to this valuable bleſſing, it may be often ſaid, "Ye receive not, "becauſe ye aſk not ‡." It is too common for thoſe who were earneſt in crying for mercy, while they thought themſelves under the curſe and power of the law, to grow ſlack and remiſs in prayer ſoon after they obtain ſome hope of ſalvation from the

* James, i. 8.; 1 Kings, xviii. 21.; Prov. xxiii. 26. Pſ. ix. 1. † Pſ. cxix. 6.; John, xiv. 22, 23. ‡ James, iv. 2.

the gospel; and particularly they do not "give all "diligence to make their calling and election "sure *," in the careful use of every means appointed for their establishment in the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore that word is fulfilled in them, "The slothful soul desireth, and hath no- "thing †." They go on for months or years in a complaining unsettled state; and deservedly, because they are not earnest in seeking, asking, waiting, knocking at the gate of wisdom, and at the throne of grace, for that blessing which the Lord has promised to those who persevere in wrestling prayer, and will take no denial.

3. Misapprehensions. These arise from a neglect of examining the scriptures, and an undue deference to the decisions of men. If assurance is supposed unattainable, it will consequently not be sought after. If it is expected as an instantaneous impression of the Spirit of God upon the mind, independent of his word, or to arise from some sudden powerful application of a particular text of scripture, this persuasion will end in disappointment. For though it must be allowed, that the Lord does at times favour his people with peculiar manifestations of his goodness, and perhaps seal some promise especially suited to their present circumstances, with a remarkable sweetness and evidence upon their minds, yet these do rarely produce the assurance we are speaking of. These are but visits, seldom vouchsafed, and quickly suspended; and those who depend chiefly upon such impressions, instead of endeavouring to grow in the scriptural knowledge of Christ, are generally as changeable in their hopes as in their frame. While their affections are thus engaged, "their mountain "stands strong, and they think they shall never "be

* 2 Pet. i. 10. † Prov. xiii. 4.

" be moved *;" but when the cauſe is withdrawn, the effect ceaſes, and they preſently relapſe into their former fears and inquietudes: Not to ſay, that expectations of this ſort have a tendency to great inconveniencies, and often open a door to the deluſions of enthuſiaſm and dangerous impoſitions: for Satan, when permitted, knows how to transform himſelf into an angel of light †. If inherent ſanctification, or a conſiderable increaſe of it, is conſidered as the proper ground of aſſurance, thoſe who are moſt humble, ſincere, and deſirous of being conformed to the will of God, will be the moſt perplexed and diſcouraged in their ſearch after it. For they of all others will be the leaſt ſatisfied with themſelves, and have the quickeſt ſenſe of the innumerable defilements and defects, which the ſcripture aſſures us are inſeparable from our beſt tempers and beſt actions. Theſe miſtakes, with others that might be mentioned, prevent many from ſeeking after aſſurance at all, and bewilder many more, by putting them upon a wrong purſuit. But what then is aſſurance? and how is it to be attained? I ſhall attempt an anſwer to theſe queſtions together in the next propoſition.

IV. " ASSURANCE is the reſult of a competent " ſpiritual knowledge of the perſon and work of " Chriſt as revealed in the goſpel, and a conſcious- " neſs of dependence on him and his work alone " for ſalvation." What I apprehend neceſſary to make my meaning plain, will occur from a brief explanation of the terms I have made uſe of in this deſcription.

1. By the term *ſpiritual knowledge*, I would aſcribe it to the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit

* Pſ. xxx. 7. † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

Spirit of God, and distinguished it both from that speculative knowledge of divine things which natural men may acquire from books and human instruction, and likewise from that knowledge which a real believer may attain in the same way, beyond the limits of his present experience. Those who are favoured with great outward advantages, particularly the light of a clear gospel-ministry, may very soon arrive to a notional apprehension of the most important truths; but with respect to the spiritual and abiding perception of those truths, there is no effectual teacher but the Spirit of God: and we often find, that what we think we have learned of men, we have occasion to be taught again by the Lord the Spirit; for our acquisitions fail us when we have most need of them, and will not stand the trial of an hour of temptation. But, so far as we have received our views of Jesus, his person, offices, mediation, and promises, from *him*, we possess them, and should be able to defy an angel, if he was to propose to us any other doctrine than that which we have surely known and believed *.

2. I use the word *competent*, because there is not, that I know of, any determinate standard where to fix. When our knowledge is so far increased as to overpower the objections arising from inward corruptions, defects of obedience, unbelieving fears, and the temptations of Satan; when we can cut them short with that question of the apostle, "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that "died †," assurance follows of course. For I do not understand assurance in the strictest sense for the highest degree of certainty imaginable. Assurance itself is capable of increase; and will be so continually, while there is any darkness in our understandings,

* Gal. i. 8. † Rom. viii. 34.

derſtandings, or any remaining propenſity to a ſelf-righteous ſpirit. Then only will our aſſurance be perfect, when we ſhall ſee Jeſus as he is, and be completely freed from all our infirmities. For theſe, in whatever degree they prevail, will ſo far affect the ſtrength and ſteadineſs of our confidence in God.

3. This knowledge is wrought in us by the Spirit, through the medium of the written word. He teaches no unrevealed truths. We are not to expect that he will aſſure us as by a voice from heaven, or by a ſudden impulſe upon our hearts, that *our* names in particular are written in the book of life; but he opens our underſtandings to underſtand the ſcripture *, to aſſent to, and feel, that we are ſuch ſinners as are there deſcribed, to ſee the dignity and ſufficiency of Chriſt Jeſus, as God-man, the Mediator, the ſuitableneſs of his offices, the value of his atonement and righteouſneſs, and the harmony and glory of the divine attributes, in the adorable methods of redeeming love, which renders it juſt, righteous, and worthy of God, to juſtify and ſave the believing ſinner †. He likewiſe gives us to underſtand the freedom and ſecurity of the goſpel-promiſes, confirmed by the oath of God, and ſealed with the blood of his Son. He ſhews us the eſtabliſhment and immutability of the covenant of grace; convinces us, that there is a fulneſs of wiſdom, grace, life, and ſtrength, treaſured up in Chriſt, for the uſe and ſupport of thoſe who in themſelves are poor, miſerable, and helpleſs, and to be freely communicated in meaſure and ſeaſon, as he ſees neceſſary, to ſupport, nouriſh, and revive the believing ſoul, and to lead him in the path of perſeverance to everlaſting life. Such a diſcovery

* Luke, xxiv. 45. † Rom. iii. 26.

very of almighty power, and unchangeable love, engaged for the infallible salvation of every believer, which they cannot lose by their own unworthiness, nor be deprived of by all the opposition which earth or hell can raise against them *, produces a suitable assurance in the soul that receives it. And we can confidently say, "We know we are of God," when we can in this manner know in whom we have believed.

4. Such discoveries of the person and grace of Christ are connected with a heart-felt consciousness, that the believer's dependence for all the great hopes and ends of salvation are fixed on him and his work alone. They draw forth acts of surrender and trust, and keep the mind from forming any vain scheme of hope or refuge, either in whole or in part, from any other quarter. Indeed, from the very first dawnings of faith, as I have observed, the soul is led to commit itself into the hands of Jesus; but while knowledge was weak, and the heart very imperfectly humbled, there was a secret, though unallowed, dependence upon self, upon resolutions, frames, and duties. But as Jesus rises more glorious in the eye of faith, self is in the same degree depressed and renounced; and when we certainly see that there is no safety or stability but in him alone, we as certainly feel that we expect them from him, and from him only. And the Holy Spirit assists here likewise, bears a comfortable witness with our spirits †, by drawing us to a throne of grace, pleading in us as a Spirit of adoption, and prompting us to renew the renunciation of ourselves, "and to glory in Jesus, as "made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, "sanctification, and redemption ‡," from day to day.

* John, x. 28. 29. † Rom. viii. 15. 16.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.

day. And from hence arises a solid permanent assurance. The believer, though weak and unstable as water in himself, and though continually assaulted by a powerful combination against his peace, can look through all to Jesus, and say, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor "principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor "things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any "other creature, shall be able to separate me from "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our "Lord *."

What remains, then, but to animate and press every sincere believer to strive, in God's appointed way, for a comfortable assurance, that they are accepted in the Beloved, passed from death unto life, and infallibly freed from all condemnation. Tho' this knowledge is not absolutely necessary to our safety, it is exceeding useful to make us unwearied, chearful, and evangelical, in a course of holy obedience, to the exertion of all our powers and faculties in the service of him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to give us courage to endure and surmount the many difficulties and oppositions which we are sure to meet with in the course of our profession. Unbelief and distrust weaken our hands, "and make "our knees feeble †." The more steadily we confide in God, the better we shall serve him; we shall be enabled to cast all our cares upon him, to rely on his promise, to make our strength equal to our day; and having a well-grounded expectation of receiving the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls, we shall stand fast in the evil day, and say, "None of these things move "me;

* Rom. viii. 38. 39. † Heb. xii. 12.

" me; neither count I my life dear, so that I may " finish my course with joy *." I would only subjoin two cautions to those who are thus minded.

1. Remember that the progress of faith to assurance is gradual. Expect it not suddenly; but wait upon the Lord for it in the ways of his appointment. As it depends upon the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, let this engage you to constancy and earnestness in prayer; and as it arises from a knowledge of Jesus, be assiduous in searching the scriptures, which testify of him. "The blessing of " the Lord and the hand of the diligent concur in " the attainments of this benefit †." If you persevere in this path, you will be helped forward by the experience of every day; and every dispensation of providence, as well as every exercise and frame of mind you pass through, will be sanctified, to give you an increasing conviction, that you are nothing, and that Jesus is all in all.

2. As you cannot see or maintain a sight of your interest in the covenant, but by the light of the Spirit, beware of grieving him ‡. If you indulge a careless trifling disposition, or venture upon known sin, you will find dark clouds raised between the Sun of righteousness and your souls. Assurance is not so invariable, but that it may be affected, weakened, and perhaps for a season quite suspended, by unfaithfulness and backsliding on our part. If you have a persuasion of your interest in the love of God, that remains always the same, though prayer is restrained, the ordinances slighted, and watchfulness intermitted; take heed lest this, instead of assurance, should be vain confidence and presumption. The hope that maketh not

* Acts, xx. 24. † Prov. x. 4. 22.
‡ Ephes. iv. 30.

not ashamed, endears every precept and ordinance to the soul, weans the affections from low and trivial pursuits, and strengthens the exercise of every gracious principle.

As it is thus possible and desirable for a believer to "know that he is of God;" so a concern for many here present will not suffer me to close, without desiring you to consider if you have not cause to conclude, from scripture-testimony, that you are *not* of God. See the cause determined by an apostle: "Whosoever doth not righteousness, is "not of God *." And again, by another, "If "any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is "none of his †." Are not these decisions plain and absolute? If your love and dependence are not fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, if your tempers and practice are not governed by his commands, you are not of God. Who, then, do you belong to? The whole world is divided between two masters, and ranged under opposite banners. A neutrality is impossible. If you are not of God, you belong at present to Satan; you are his captive ‡; he leads you blindfold; and he meditates your destruction, when you shall have worn out your lives in his miserable service. And will you continue fond of your bondage, and follow him like an ox to the slaughter? There is a redemption-price paid, there is an arm of power revealed, in favour of such helpless perishing prisoners. Jesus, whom we preach, "is able to take the prey "out of the hand of the mighty, and to deli-"ver the lawful captive ||." The Lord help you to apply to him before iniquity is your ruin. O may he incline you to believe and be saved **! If you

* 1 John, iii. 10.
† Rom. viii. 9.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 26.
|| Is. xlix. 24.
** Acts, xvi. 31.

you reject him, you seal yourself to an aggravated condemnation, and must perish without mercy: "But if you hear his voice, and call upon his "name, he is able to save to the uttermost, and to "bless you, in turning every one of you from your "iniquities. *"

* Heb. vii. 25.; Acts, iii. 26.

END of the FOURTH VOLUME.